HM

THE HARD MUSIC MAGAZINE

Believer
The Red Jumpsuit Apparatus
A Plea For Purging
Impending Doom
Dragonforce
2008 Readers' Poll Awards
Brave Saint Saturn
TDWP Poster

THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA

0 74470 79599 5 03

March, April 2009 • *Issue #136*
$3.99 USA / 4.50 CDN

SEVENTH DAY SLUMBER
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IN STORES & ONLINE MARCH 10, 2009
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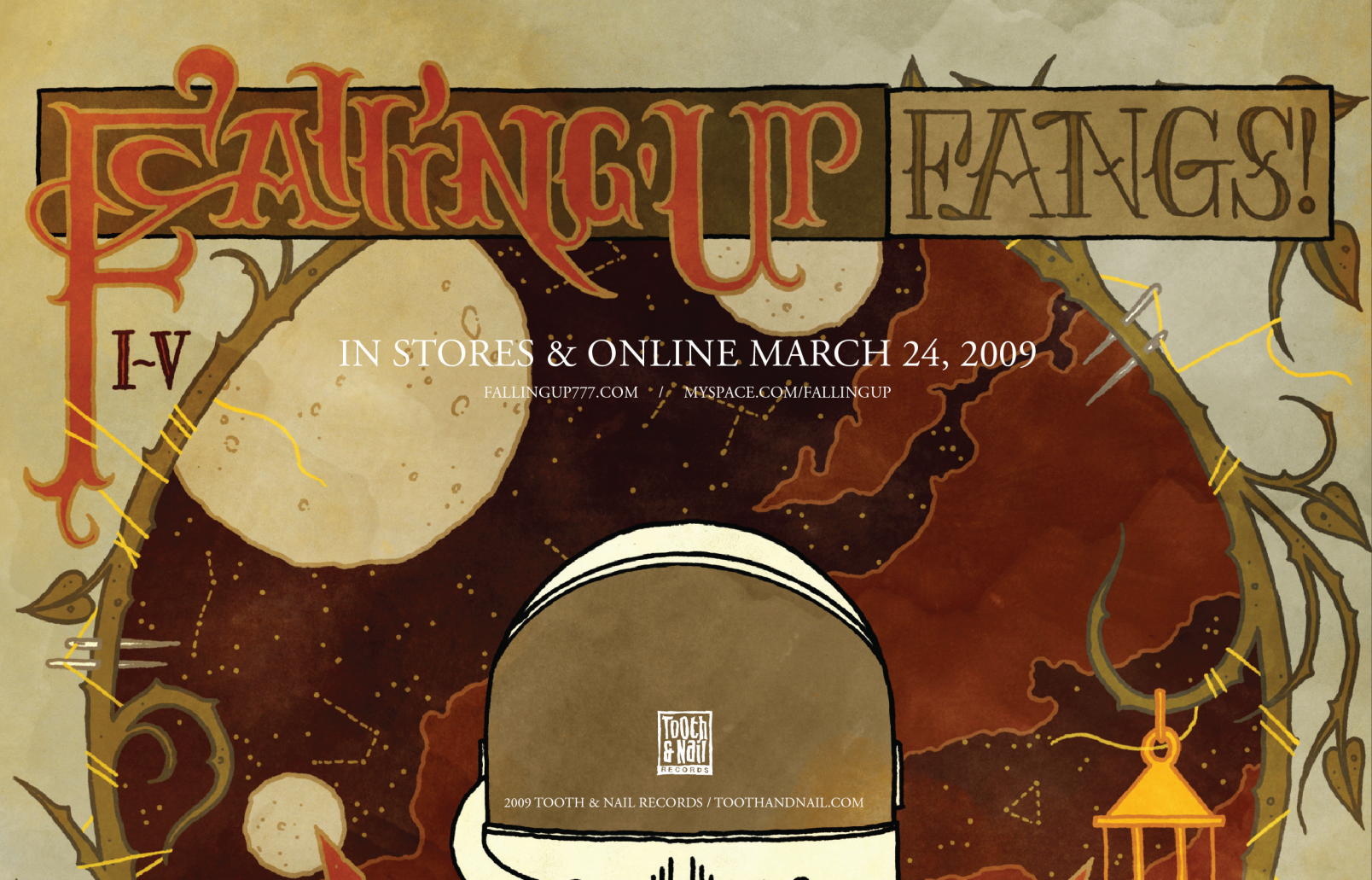
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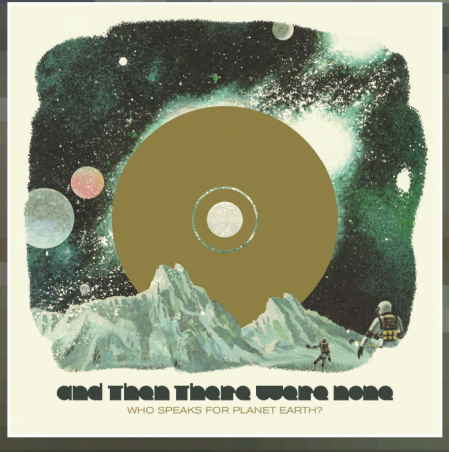

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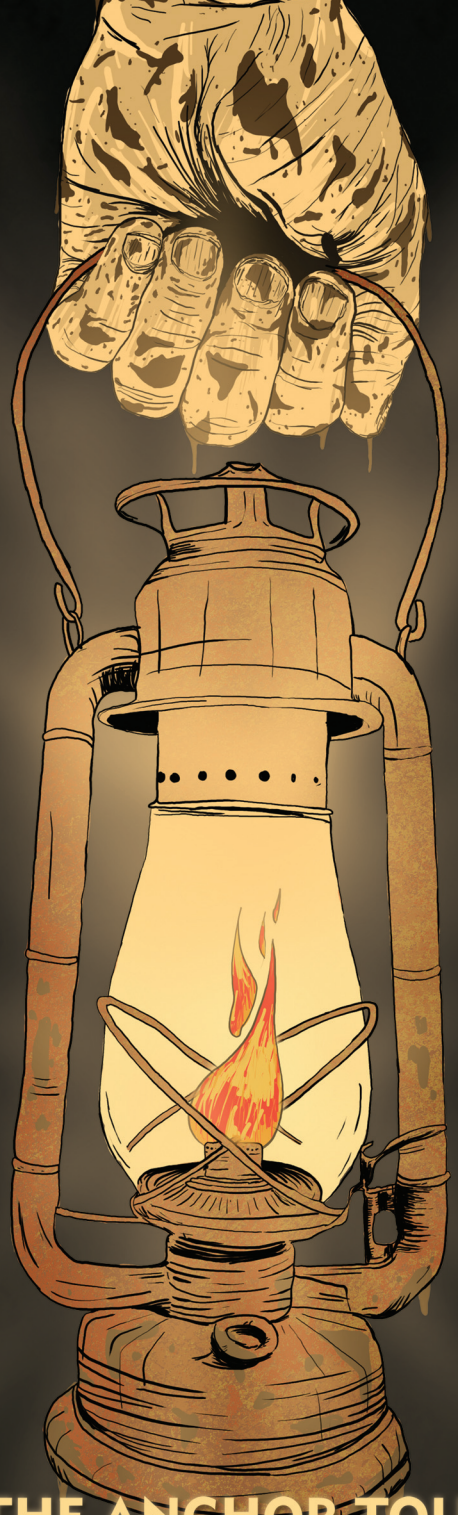

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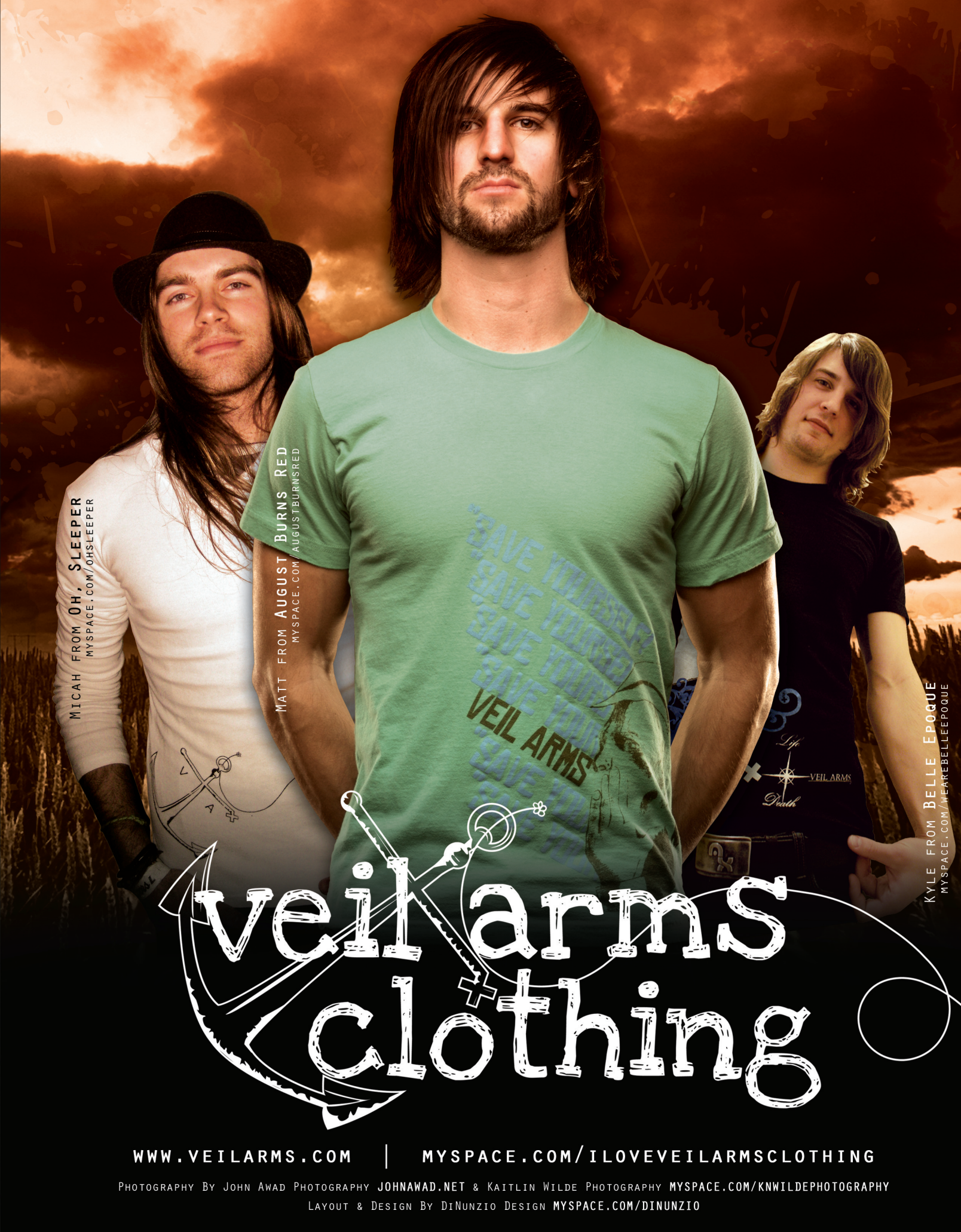

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From the editor

Doug Van Pelt

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE SIZE OF THE METAL IN THE MAG

This issue has surprised me. Our advertising, which most any magazine will tell you is its "life blood," has decreased dramatically. It forces us to clamp down and shrink instead of expand. Normally, we're sporting an 80-plus page magazine. The 72 pages you are now holding is almost as low as I'd like to ever go. We did a 56-pager five years ago, and that seems way too thin for this editor. After discussing options with our printer, who we've been printing with since 1991, we were told about the option of reducing our "trim size." While this may sound like a diet plan, it means using less paper. While I can't claim the utmost in environmental motives, it's definitely a "green" move.

Okay, we did another "weird" thing this issue, at least according to my way of thinking. Here's the deal: we cover bands when they have a new album coming out. We like to time the article/interview/review to coincide with the album's release, because we don't want to get someone all stoked about the new album and then force them to wait a long time. We don't want to be late, either. I mean, what if the album is a stinker and you wasted $15 on it, only to read our "warning" to stay away a month too late? Thus, timing is very important to us. If we plan on a certain release and (for whatever reason) the release date gets changed, we'll postpone that coverage. The Philmont and Decyfer Down stories are both cases in point this issue. Another huge case in point was with The Devil Wears Prada, whose album release date has been moved to early May (the 5th?). Normally, this would mean we'd move the TDWP story to the May/June issue, but the thought of having a cover of these guys was so cool that we decided to bend the rule. I didn't even want to have to possibly choose between TDWP, Living Sacrifice, U2, Paramore, Zao, or Mute Math (all of which will be on our radar for the next couple of issues), so instead of potentially "losing" one killer cover, I chose TDWP for now. Hope you like my choice. It wasn't easy.

If you haven't done so already, check out our 2008 Readers' Poll Awards on page 32. If you agree with the results (a lot of you voted), then please let us (and the bands) know. If you disagree, please be sure to vote next year and/or tell more of your friends about it.

SPINNING AT HM NOW

W/FAITH OR FLAMES	*A Conquest Triumphant*	Yes! Blood-curdling screaming and metal!
VARIOUS ARTISTS	*Scandinavian Metal Praise*	Crazy heavy praise and worship songs.
MOLLY JENSON	*Maybe Tomorrow*	Nettwerk is good at finding great voices.
JAIMEE PAUL	*At Last*	Jazzy lounge R&B singing with guts.
ANDREAS SANDLUND	*Diamond No: 1*	Droning melodic rock. Reminds me of The Choir.
HILL SONG LONDON	*Hail To The King*	Pretty hip with real energy. Harder than CCM radio.
AUGUST BURNS RED	*Lost Messengers...*	This band is so good, even their outtakes rule!

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Letters to the Edit

FLASH: WINNERS NOT FAKE!

Hello HM Magazine! I just want to say thank you for the great prize CD I received after answering correctly a trivia question! Your publication is one of the best around! And hands down the best Christian publication! Me and my daughter had fun rocking out to the tunes on *Hearts Bleed Passion 3*! Here are a few pictures of us enjoying the disc. Hope you like. Keep up the great work!
–Kurtis Wilson, Provincetown, MA

Ed – Thanks for the encouragement. Your daughter looks all emo and stuff.

PORNO

Even though *300* has pornographic material. I mean... I'm not saying watching it is unChristian, I'm just wondering why y'all would promote anything relatively pornographic. Maybe instead promote Clearview or something, cut out the stuff that makes guys stumble – I'm sure you know, but in case you don't – the tiniest bit of temptation can do so much damage.
–Bruce Gonzalez Jr, via internet

Ed – Sorry for the offense. We review DVDs that we think people are watching or will want to watch, offering a Christian worldview in the short review. We also supply the reader with info, like the amount of cusswords, violence, sex, etc, so that they can make an informed choice.

BLEED INTO ONE

I saw the trailer on youtube for *Bleed Into One* a while back and I was wondering if you had any idea when they're gonna release it? Anyway, hope all is well. I wish you, your family, and HM a blessed 2009!
–Dave Kratz, via internet

Ed – The producer tells us that, "there are plans for industry screenings this spring, festival showings in the summer, with a fall college tour and limited theater release to follow." We can't wait!

GET BACK ISSUE #114

I'm sure you and everyone at HM are constantly receiving "thank you's" from people who really enjoy your magazine. The reason is because HM has really revolutionized the Christian hard music scene. Me and my mom used to go out and buy other Christian music magazines, hoping that they could have at least some mention of a harder band. Then, we learned about HM and we've been hooked ever since. The articles about the history of Christian rock in the 20th anniversary edition is probably one of the most useful pieces of literature I've ever read. Every edition gives valuable information and excellent entertainment. I particularly enjoy the album reviews, because I don't always agree with the writer, but it is enjoyable to see another side of the spectrum. But I digress. I just wanted to let you and everyone at HM know that you are appreciated by every one of your readers, because of your hard work and commitment to putting out an honest music magazine for us. Thank you so much for all your hard work all these years! Keep rockin'
–Carrie Gendle, via internet

Ed – I love that back issue, too. Thanks.

I'VE BEEN DIRTIER...

Ha ha. The new revelation by Aaron Gillespie in HM gives new meaning to the lyrics when I hear them now.
–Daniel Bell, via internet

Ed – I hadn't thought of that ... until now.

MYSPACE SHOULD PAY US

I first decided to subscribe to HM after CCM Magazine went to a web mag. I'm so glad I did. So, yeah, every time I get a new issue, my whole day gets so much brighter and I always end up on some band's myspace page, rocking out. Thank you!
–Max Justus, via myspace

Ed – Thanks for the max encouragement.

FADES AWAY

Just wanted to thank you for putting us in the "Pick of the Litter" section! The review was great and we really appreciate it! We opened for Project 86 last night and after the show some kid came up to us and was like "Hey, you're in my HM!" I didn't even know it was out yet so it was pretty exciting!
–Dave, via internet

Ed – I'm glad this wasn't one of those "fake inclusions," where someone gets out their crayon and "adds" new content to HM by scribbling something in. Whew! I was worried for a second there...

HM

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SCRIPTURE "Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips that confess His Name." (Hebrews 13:15)

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HARDNEWS
Quick & concise

GREG MINIER
SOLO ALBUM IS NOT THIS ONLY ACTIVITY

Plenty of news is swirling around about a potential Crucified reunion. First there was a resurrection of their cooler-than-cool merchandise (who doesn't want a Crucified shirt?), then a MySpace page, and now official news of a Crucified boxset,which will include all of their recorded output, including the two songs that Ocean Records put out on their *Light From The Underground* compilations ("Straining Life" and "Power of God"). The powers that be finally sold the rights to *Pillars Of Humanity*, which has been remixed for the project. This just in: The Crucified has just been confirmed for a Friday night show at Cornerstone (July 3 ... see you there)! Meanwhile, Greg Minier has stayed busy all these years as a special education English teacher, as well as playing in a Fresno, CA, covers band. He recently returned to songwriting, releasing several melodic pop rock songs on his MySpace page.

FLATFOOT 56
RECORDING WITH JOHNNY RIOUX

Chicago's Celtic-punk outfit Flatfoot 56 will enter Absolute Sound in Houston, Texas on February 1st to begin the recording process for their highly anticipated new album, due out later this year. Johnny Rioux of Street Dogs will take the helm as the album's producer and engineer. Over the last 2 years, the band has also continuously written new material, compiling dozens of songs to choose from for the upcoming album. Though they are considering offers, Flatfoot 56 have yet to decide on a label for the album's release. "We are all very excited about the new material," says singer Tobin Bawinkel. "With the combination of having newer and more mature music, coupled with working with Johnny Rioux as producer, we are expecting to put out a record that not only carries the Celtic traditions we have become known for, but also take what we do in a direction that is harder-hitting and more intelligent."

August Burns Red Unloads The Vault

August Burns Red is releasing a special EP, called *Lost Messengers: The Outtakes*, which is a collection of b-sides and outtakes from the *Messengers* album. "Several of the songs on the EP were heavily considered for the record, but were cut last minute," explains guitarist JB Brubaker, "and I think that fans will really appreciate them." One of the tunes is the band's cover of "Carol Of The Bells," which was utilized heavily in television and online spots for Frank Miller's film, *The Spirit*. "We were in Europe when we received word that 'Carol of the Bells' had been chosen for the trailer of *The Spirit*," Brubaker states. "We had never had anything like this happen before, and to hear one of our songs on a TV commercial while chilling at home watching a football game was completely surreal." In addition to the *Lost Messengers* EP, ABR explores new ground in '09 via Fearless Records' upcoming *Punk Goes Pop 2* compilation, on which they tackle Britney Spears' "Hit Me Baby One More Time." The band hits the studio for their next full-length at the end of February.

News bullets

Thousand Foot Krutch was tapped to perform at the Winter X Games 13 in Aspen/Snowmass, CO, as part of the "Best of the Beat" for Taco Bell®'s Feed the Beat program, which the band was voted as one of three winners in 2008. TFK is no stranger to the sports arena as it was "Rawkfist" that became the first great sports anthem of the 21st century, being heard everywhere from sports stadiums to commercials (NHL, NFL and major league baseball, ESPN).

Zao has been at Lambesis Studios in San Marcos, CA, with Daniel Castleman mixing the new album, which was recorded in the following locations: Latrobe PA (near Greensburg), Pittsburgh PA, Encitas CA and San Marcos CA. The album was produced by **Scott Mellinger** with Daniel and **Tim Lambesis**. It features 11 tracks. 10 of them are brand new, while "Romance of the Southern Spirit" has been re-recorded with "the sonic quality it deserves ... that smashes the basement b-side version you've heard." The new album is going to be called *AWAKE?* Some of the song titles are: "1,000,000 Outstretched Arms Of Nothing," "The Eyes Behind The Throne," "Human Cattle Masses Marching Forward," and "Quiet Passenger Pt. 2." The album will be released by Ferret Music most likely in the spring.

The Becoming is about to start a busy 2009 touring with **The Red Jumpsuit Apparatus** and Tickle Me Pink, including a few off dates with Madina Lake. The band has also just released a video for "I Cry" on their myspace page.

The Appleseed Cast is proud to announce the release of *Sagarmatha*, their sixth studio album and second release with The Militia Group. The Appleseed Cast recorded at Mixtape Soundlab and Toy Shop, with their own **Christopher Crisci** engineering, and later re-grouped with Ed Rose at Black Lodge Recording in Lawrence, KS, for instrumental overdubs and mixing. The record leads The Appleseed Cast "to the peak of their musical ability," into experimental post-rock, and often purely instrumental territory. Shortly before release, The Appleseed Cast will embark on a US tour.

Long Live The Smoking Gun

BY ADAM P. NEWTON

True indie aesthetic, that willingness to buck trends and pursue one's deep-seated passion, should always be encouraged, especially when embodied by a band like this unabashed and ambitious rock collective based in Tucson, AZ. Their brawny, gritty debut EP, *We Build Empires*, has already garnered some favorable attention and comparisons, so we welcomed the chance to speak with the band's singer and guitarist, Rob Easter.

"This band is basically committed to carrying the torch of rock-n-roll and being influenced by our natural, brutal desert surroundings," declared Rob. "It's an interesting dynamic how Long Live The Smoking Gun started, how we record, and how there is a revolving door for members. It's like a country band that throws in different people at different times, and it works for us, especially since some of us are students, some of us are married, and the others move towns on a regular basis."

Production-wise, the record is more than a bit dirty, organic, and almost blues-y; thus, this seemingly free-wheeling collective must have some very specific influences forming their sound.

"I listen to Tom Waits, Johnny Cash, and old blues like Son House and Robert Johnson more than anything else. I try to let myself be molded by real things, not just the watered down relational whiny stuff everybody sings now. I basically craft riffs and choruses and then bring the loose bones and flesh to the band, and we watch the Frankenstein take form. We don't really write songs: we put organic matter together and watch it come to life." Along with their old-school musical sources, the band's lyrics are replete with dense themes, many of which come straight from the Old Testament. "There are a lot of classical influences that take over, and one of the biggest is the Bible. I don't hold to a 'Christian band' thing, but my writing is influenced by how I live: trying to love my enemies, thinking of others as more important than myself, and throwing away the unnecessary things we hold to. I am also influenced by writers like Poe, Cormac McCarthy, and Kerouac – some of them help me vocalize the terrors of actual humanity, like when the rubber meets the road and I forget to love people."

We Build Empires was recorded with Rob's friend Adam Taylor on drums and Rob on everything else, but "this band isn't a two-piece [on tour]. All our shows feature four guys and lots of yelling, and usually end in positive attitudes and blood. Our shows are a combination of a buffalo stampede and an electrical storm."

Having ended 2008 on a high note, the band plans on stepping things up in 2009 by doing "double-dates in a lot of towns: a standard rock-n-roll show one night, and then the next night, we will be playing low-key coffee shops/lounges/hotels/historic sites/parties with all of us stripped down to acoustic instruments for some blues and western music. We need to get back and record, but we're still in the 'life-giving' process with our new songs. A gnarly full length is right around the corner!"

Brazilian Prog power metallers **Adiastasia** will be releasing their sophomore release on Bombworks Records in 2009.

The Crucified is releasing a box-set that Tooth & Nail is releasing in March. A remixed *Pillars of Humanity*, the self-titled debut and the *Nailed* re-release is included.

After three full-length albums between both independent and major record labels and over 400,000 in lifetime sales, **MAE** have a new purpose and a new partner – their fans. With the help of the band's international community, MAE have embarked on a year-long journey to help those less fortunate and raise awareness about important humanitarian issues. Absent a label and management, the band is seizing the opportunity to redefine their success, change the lives of those in need, and spread their message through music and the MAE community. As a part of a year-long campaign, MAE will release a new song exclusively on their website every month during 2009. When fans visit the band's website (whatismae.com), they will be able to hear the music for free. Every song will be available as a digital download for a minimum donation of $1. For the duration of 2009, MAE will commit all of the profits from digital downloads to fund humanitarian projects that the band and their fans will be a part of all year long. The first project is in conjunction with Habitat For Humanity International. The band's goal is to raise $65,000 in donations to fully fund the construction of a home for Rhonda Floyd and her three children in Newport News, VA. Throughout the course of the project, MAE will document their progress on the home.

Mute Math was recently tapped to perform their tune off the *Twilight Soundtrack* on *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*. The band are currently in the studio recording their 2nd Teleprompt/Warner Bros. Records album. Release is expected later this year. The band made TV history last year as the first-ever band to perform backwards, by recreating their "Typical" video performance live on a nationally televised network show.

HARDNEWS
Page fourteen

Revive

Revive is an Australian rock import, brought to the attention of the Provident Music Group / Essential Records label by Mac Powell of Third Day, who toured with the band Down Under. We had a chance to chat with the lead singer, Dave Hanbury:

How was it working with Mac Powell on this CD?
Fantastic. Mac is so gifted in the art of songwriting. Weaving great melodies with thoughtful lyrics is what he does best. So, having Mac help shape our songs in the studio as they came to life was awesome!

What were some crazy things that happened that you remember from the experience?
Well, we had many funny times when we couldn't understand each other. Being Australian we have pretty different accents and we would talk to Mac or each other quickly and he would look at us and say "What!? ... Okay, you're going to have to translate for me." We had fun making up silly Australian terms and then convincing the Americans in the studio that they were real. They would also make us eat weird American food like grits, sweet tea and boiled peanuts. I'm sorry if I have offended any of your readers, but they are all so very bad!

What are the positive benefits of doubting?
I think people have times of doubt when they are potentially going through a time of pain or suffering. While those times are hard, they almost always deepen our faith. If we will allow God to continue to work in us during those times, our faith can be made stronger and more real.

Who do you plan on touring with? What do you know about these bands? What are some little-known facts about these bands?
We plan to fly back into the USA early Feb and do some Revive shows. We hit the road with Third Day and Brandon Heath on March 5th. Can't wait! I don't know Brandon very well yet, so I can't say much about him. Third Day we know pretty well now... Some little known facts about them: Mark Lee (guitarist) is a walking encyclopedia. The dude is awesome. I have spent much time on the road learning American history and many other subjects. Tai (bass) and David (Drums) love their coffee and we've shared many good and bad cups on the road. Mac is a bit of a football nut. He has tried to teach us the rules and grow some enthusiasm in us about it. He even put on a game last tour with the crew and bands. Revive did quite poorly. We kept asking questions like, "What does 'hut hut' mean?"

What's one of the most over-looked details by bands that are touring and playing live?
Connecting with an audience.

News bullets

Gwen Stacy has digitally re-issued their Ferret Music debut album, *The Life I Know*. This version contains six additional songs from the band's EP prior to signing with Ferret. "I'm excited for kids to hear the old EP. I think it'll give them an idea of where we've come from and will help *The Life I Know* make more sense," drummer **TJ Sego** commented. The band has also announced their new lead singer, **Geoff Jenkins**, formerly a guitarist/vocalist for **Once Nothing**. "He was a really close friend of ours before any talk of him joining the band and we knew he was a great screamer from his time in Once Nothing. We had our first show with him already and it went great, and I think the kids are going to love him." The band is going to tour Europe with Poison the Well.

Congrats to **Hundred Year Storm**'s **Bill McCharen** and his wife, **Nicole**, on the birth of their son, **Jude Alexander**, born January 3rd at 8 pounds.

Australian tech death metal band **Dei Elithaeon** are pleased to announce that **Mercury** from **Fearscape** will be the permanent vocalist/lyricist for the band. They describe their sound as "Suffocation meets Slayer meets Nightwish."

War of Ages will soon be shooting a video for "All Consuming Fire," which will be shot as a 'live' video.

The new album from **Kevin Max**, *Crashing Gates,* will be his first release on the dPulse. "This is where *The Imposter* left off," says Max. "We cut the songs, playing together, and sometimes found ourselves jamming into 10 minute long vamp sections." Max and his band will be touring the USA and Europe.

Australian progressive blackmetal giants **Fearscape** are working on a new EP, *Nightmare Psalms*, and will see the band move into a new and more brutal death/blackmetal direction. Due to family and work commitments, drummer **Paul Demitrivich** has resigned from the band, and drumming duties will be announced at a later date.

Underneath The Gun

What are some things that totally turn you on to hardcore music?
Guitarist Trevor Vickers: Definitely the aggressiveness of the music, and the overall rawness of the sound. And most hardcore bands usually sing about something worth writing a song about; something that they feel strongly about, rather than the usual scenario of getting your heart broken.

What about death metal?
I love how much complexity goes into most metal music. I think the majority of metal musicians out there are extremely talented people, and I think it takes a lot of effort to take a genre like metal, and turn it into something that is super aggressive and heavy, yet still make it somewhat catchy and memorable.

What was it like working with Tim Lambesis? How did his studio work out? What are some things he did that you liked? What are some things (if any) that he did that surprised you?
Working with Tim was great, it was definitely a great experience for us. I think he helped show us a lot of things we hadn't ever really taken into consideration before, and I think it helped us get a better understanding of how to do certain things that had to do with the overall structure of our music. The studio was awesome! The first day we got there, I wasn't really too sure what to expect, but once we got inside and got situated and started checking stuff out, I was blown away at how much amazing stuff Tim had to work with. And I think the overall setup of the studio, with the house being there for us to live in while we recorded really helped the vibe stay pretty laid back. Even when we were getting down to the wire to finish the album, we were still having a great time working with Tim and Daniel. A few things we liked about Tim were that: for one, he's a super knowledgeable dude about music, so when it came down to producing our album, he definitely had a lot of good input and ideas. And he was pretty laid back, and easy to work with. There wasn't really anything he did that was too surprising. There were a few times when we would be sort of surprised at how things sounded when we would try certain things, but nothing really shocking. I think the one thing Tim would do that made us laugh a bit, and we would kind of joke about with Daniel (our engineer) would be his mouth chugging skills (laughs). Tim can mouth guitar parts out like nobody's business.

How would you define your sound? What makes you different than other bands in your scene?
(hesitates) Well, I would say there's a lot of diversity to our sound overall. It's definitely pretty heavy, but still has plenty of catchy and melodic parts as well. I would say our newer stuff is a lot different than anything we've done in the past. We definitely kept everything pretty metal for the most part, and kept a lot of breakdowns, and a lot of heavy elements to our music. But I think we have added a lot of structure, and there's definitely a lot more maturity in the music we're writing now. I think a few things that make us different than other bands in our scene is that we have a lot of diversity to our music. I don't think you can really listen to our record and say that we sound like any other particular band, I think there's a lot of different elements that go into our songs to help sort of "mix it up" in a sense. And I also think a big thing that separates us from most bands in our scene is the fact that we are a Christian band. I think there's a lot of bands in our scene that sing about a lot of hateful and evil things, while we sing about our faith, and the fact that there's a lot more to believe in than just this disgusting world we all live in.

If you had to choose between a bad instrumentation night or a bad vocal night, which would you choose?
I would have to choose a bad vocal night. I think if the vocals aren't sounding as good as usual, it's a lot easier to still put on a good show. I think singers can interact with the crowd a lot, and have kids singing along, whereas we can't have kids helping us play our instruments. It's a lot easier to tell if the overall music doesn't sound tight in my opinion.

Bombworks Records signed **Deus Invictus**. Hailing from the greater Atlanta area in Georgia, this 4-piece band plays "a unique brand of progressive melodic thrash with death elements that is extremely technical and is willing to experiment." The drummer, **Jeff Carter**, will be remembered by many as the drummer on **The Chariot**'s first album and tour before leaving the band and helping to found Deus Invictus.

A Hill To Die Upon just signed to Bombworks. The brutal yet melodic black metal band will be releasing their debut full length album in June. It will be recorded by Kevin Rendleman at Trash Rocket Studios in Peoria, IL and mixed by Eric Tordsson (Crimson Moonlight) at Dark Chamber Studios.

Mantric, the name of the band that was left when **David Husvik** and **Peter Espevoll** decided to leave **Extol**, are these days finishing their debut-album. About half of the twelve songs on the album were originally meant for the next Extol release, which will point to a natural progression from *The Blueprint Dives*, "yet more dirty and aggressive." The two guitar players **Ole Halvard Sveen** and **Tor Magne Glidje** (which were also the main songwriters on *TBD*) have taken over the vocals, while **Kim Akerholdt** (known from Norwegian award-winning punk rock-act Silver) has taken over the drums after Husvik left. Tue Madsen at Antfarm Studios in Denmark (the Haunted, Moonspell, Becoming the Archetype etc...) handles the mix, and Mantric has already published samples on their MySpace page. They say, "Try to imagine members from Radiohead, Mars Volta, Mastodon, Queens of the Stone Age, Blindside and Extol making an album together, and you might get a tiny clue of what to expect.

Showbread vocalist/front man **Josh Dies** has embarked on his first book reading/acoustic performance tour, an acoustic set made up of requests and surprises from the Showbread and DIES catalog, reading from his books, stories and poetry, and having an open Q&A and dialogue with the audience.

Klank has songs on his Facebook page.

HARDNEWS
Page sixteen

Enough Already!

BY JAMIE LEE RAKE

The increasingy slick, often questionably sincere soul gospel realm gets a shot of unvarnished a capella wonderfulness and honesty in *Como Now: The Voices Of Panola Co. Mississippi* (Daptone). Most of the African-American churchfolk gathered here tend toward the grandparental side of the chronological spectrum, but with age comes interpretive acumen. On Golden Age gospel classics and compositions of their own creation (sometimes sounding like sermonettes in their cadence), the only thing that might've made this instant classic more vivid would've been a live audience. And yay for at least three of the acts here getting their own albums soon.

Years before Peter Case was a Plimsoul, folkie or Christian, he was one-third of '70s Los Angeles' new wave'y power pop phenomeon **THE NERVES**. Over 30 years after their lone 7-inch EP, the whole of the band's revelatory work is finally compiled on CD and LP in *One Way Ticket* (Alive/Natural Sound). Like less libidinous Raspberries or a grittier Big Star, The Nerves inspired both with their songs of innocent songcraft and their DIY managerial prerogative. Get to know them as more than that band whose song Blondie remade.

The fresh-faced teens comprising **CHILDREN OF THE DAY** may not quite have been hippies, but their 1971 debut, *Come To The Waters*, surely numbers among the more remarkably lovely musical manifestations of the shaggy Jesus movement contemporaneous to their origin. Think early 2nd Ch. of Acts meeting late-period Mamas & Papas somewhere between a country rock hoedown and madrigal practice-singing some pretty theologically rounded, alternately catchy and psychedelic/prog numbers – and you have the gist of their magic. Nab the CD reissue on Watergrave/Retroactive before the pressing of 1,000 runs out.

Pornography's some spiritually poisonous stuff, so the thoughtful exposition of that fact's enough to merit a place for DVD+CD set *Somebody's Daughter* (Music for the Soul/Vision Video) in your personal or church's library. The highlight for me, however, was hearing underrated pop-rocker **RICK ALTIZER** singing the subtlest song on the soundtrack amid tunes that, understandably, veer toward the heavy handed. Now how about making a full-on comeback, Rick?

From the same ministry that birthed the often-mighty World Wide Message Tribe comes **LZ7**, a multi-culti, co-ed bunch of Brits putting their spin on hip-hop and its English offspring, grime, on their EP, *Gasoline* (The Message/OTR U.K.). With the Tribe's producer, Zarc Porter, behind the board for them, I wanted to like this. And some of Porter's handiwork, I do. But either the band is trying too hard, not trying hard enough, not giving enough solid Law & Gospel, sounding a mite condescending or something that prevents me from feeling them enough to get on board their indubitably sincere mission. Considering U.S. Xian radio's general rhythmophobia, you'll likely have to buy this as an import.

Make my day! With music I can't wait to put on my CD player, turntable and/or Windows Media Player that doesn't fit within this blessed bimonthly's usual rubric, that is. I'm apt to write about it here should you be kind enough to send it to me at P.O. Box 29;Waupun, WI 530963 U.S.A. Until next time, you know who you shouldn't let get you down, right?

News bullets

For Today is going on a headlining tour with support from **Recon**, **A Plea For Purging** and **Broadcast the Nightmare**. *The King of the Spring Tour* kicks off on March 19th with a stop at Facedown Fest before continuing through April.

Code of Ethics is releasing *Lost In Egypt* on February 10.

Anberlin is on the *Pick Up The Phone Tour* with Alkaline Trio and the To Write Love On Her Arms organization.

Bosque Brown have been quietly working on their sophomore full-length for the past 15 months with producer Chris Flemmons. Their track "Fire Fight" was featured on the *Jumping Off Bridges* independent film soundtrack.

Miami's Langerado Festival will feature Matisyahu and **Robert Randolph & The Family Band**, Mute Math, **Cold War Kids**, **Dashboard Confessional**, and many more. March 6, 7, and 8th.

No Line On The Horizon, the new studio album from **U2**, will be released on March 2nd. Three talented producers from the band's past united on this one: Brian Eno; Daniel Lanois; and Steve Lillywhite.

Strike First has signed **A Hope For Home**, who are now on the road.

Ultimatum are heading into Albuquerque's Site 16 Studios to record an album of covers titled, *Lex Metali*, which translates to "Metal is Law."

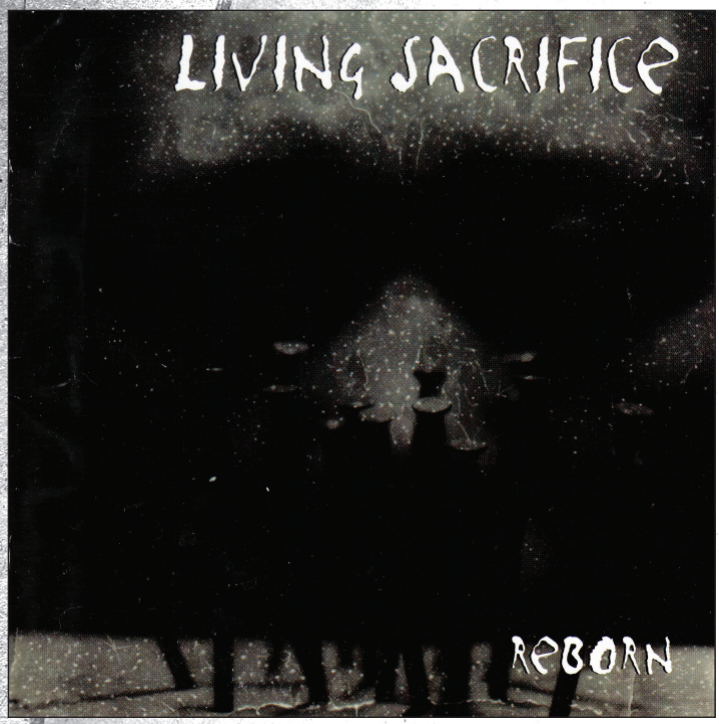
Guitarist **Jody Davis** returns to **Newsboys** after a five-year hiatus.

The guys in **Cool Hand Luke** jump-started 2009 with a January tour alongside their good friends, **My Epic**.

Facedown Records just signed **Hands**, who "unfurl hugely anthemic prog-rock ballads bearing the influence of Isis, while at the same time laying out solidly progressive hardcore tracks inspired by bands such as Life In Your Way and Misery Signals." Hands will be working with Mike Dresch at Cathouse Studios for their Facedown debut in July.

Classic Moments in Christian Rock history

BY DOUG VAN PELT & JONATHAN SWANK



LIVING SACRIFICE

Reborn

[1997 | Solid State]

Spirit-filled brutality.

Reborn – historically Tooth & Nail's first real metal output – is undoubtedly one of the all-time classic extreme metal releases. With a sound that was more groove-oriented than their previous mix of thrashy-growly death metal, these guys – in addition to rebirthing the band – essentially resuscitated a dead metal world when this was originally released back in 1997 (later reissued in 2004 on Solid State). Fitzhugh took over the mic, and with an urgency and clarity that we had never before heard from this band, they just dared to be ignored. Lyrically the band was as centered as ever – a genuine emotional outpouring combined with a passionate, yet gut-wrenching humility before the Lord – with their beliefs nicely summed up in the song "180:" "Do not open wide the door that leads to destruction / don't resurrect what has been killed." Every one of these brutally percussive, technically brilliant songs just smoked – the monstrous lurching and buzzing guitar riffing enough to make you wanna pound your fists and cry, "Arrrrgggh!" What made this album so great? Perhaps it was the way old-school metal was so seamlessly intertwined with the new; or the way Fitzhugh's harsh, yet discernable vocal assault so perfectly complimented the musical aggression; or perhaps it was the way in which space between notes was so cleverly employed; the clean production, the diversity, etc. Regardless, Living Sacrifice is one of the best Christian metal bands ever and with *Reborn* they left their indelible mark on the scene – one which would spawn such greats as Extol, As I Lay Dying and Demon Hunter. [Tooth & Nail] Jonathan Swank

MxPx

Life In General

[1996 | Tooth & Nail]

Transcending or perfecting pop punk?

MxPx had already arrived. Their *Pokinatcha* debut and *Teenage Politics* sophomore albums displayed all the youthful angst that a scene hungry for raw punk was looking for. But it was the tight playing of this trio (Yuri Ruley on drums; Mike Herrera on bass; and Tom Wisniewski on guitar) and sharp twists and turns around simple yet solid jazz-inspired riffs that brought this band to a maturity level that was world class. It was like they graduated from those banana seat bicycles in the "Punk Rawk Show" video and mounted full-blown Harley-Davidson motorcycles. Even though the be-bop/blues rock infused "Chick Magnet" is perhaps their most notorious song, this album is much more than a one-hit wonder. Anyone who's logged time with this album can attest that it's full of sing-along anthems, like "Cristalena," "Move To Bremerton" and "Do Your Feet Hurt," with its endearing opening line of, "Can I call you sweetheart?" Lyrically, "Doing Time" showed that, while they were growing older, they weren't even close to losing touch with the passion that fueled their generation. The song "Middlename" starts off the album showing that, as songwriters and a band, they paid attention to each element of the song, the bridge, for example, where they go into something quite musical and impressive. Like the best of Christian rock's short history, this piece of art wasn't something naive, mediocre, or cliche. The best evidence of this might be the mainstream attention that the band was able to capture and keep with this great album.

Look here for a couple classic, genre-changing albums highlighted each issue until we celebrate our 25th Anniversary in July, 2010; where we'll unveil a top-100 list of Christian rock's greatest albums of all time. Let the fighting begin [go to the message boards at ***hmmag.com***]

The World Just Got Louder....

FIRES OF BABYLON - FIRES OF BABYLON: Speedy power metal masterpiece from Rob Rock (Impellitteri) and Lou St. Paul (Winters Bane)

BOARDERS - THE WORLD HATES ME: Italian melodic metal/ thrash for fans of Megadeth, Realm, and Sacred Warrior

USYNLIG TUMULT - VOICES OF THE WINDS: Atmospheric black metal for fans of Antestor, Emperor, Naglfar (available March)

LAMENT - THROUGH THE REFLECTION (Special Edition) Melodic death metal for fans of Dark Tranquility, Mortification, and early Living Sacrifice (available March)

ARNION - FALL LIKE RAIN (EXPANDED EDITION): Brazilian thrash masters debut with precision, melody, and brutality! For fans of Kreator, Exodus, Ultimatum!

MENCHEN - RED ROCK: Melodic hard rock/metal featuring Bill Menchen (Titanic), Robert Sweet (Stryper), & Tony Franklin (Blue Murder)

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Brave Saint Saturn

Whether he would admit it or not, there are few names in the alternative Christian music scene as iconic as that of Reese Roper and his storied band Five Iron Frenzy. Yet, after FIF called it quits, Reese (along with fellow FIF member Dennis Culp) started a little astro-rock band called Brave Saint Saturn as an outlet for their lyrically and musically darker songs. But, after eight years and three albums (including the brand-new *ANTI-MERIDIAN*), Brave Saint Saturn has never developed quite the following that FIF had, so I sat down to speak with Reese about all things regarding his current band, solo career, and music in general.

BY ADAM NEWTON

"Five Iron sold almost a million albums (over the course of nine albums), while Brave Saint has probably sold under 30,000 of the three combined," declared Reese. "It seems to be the same with the Roper album, and other projects that all of the FIF Alum have been part of. So, just looking at the sales, I would say that most of the people who bought Five Iron albums never came over to the other bands or their recordings. I do think that we were all blessed to have made a living doing something as fun as Five Iron, and extremely blessed to not have to rely on the other bands as a means of survival."

ANTI-MERIDIAN is the conclusion to the band's astro-rock trilogy and it has its own deep, resonant set of themes, including death and dying set against victory and life, and the album artwork itself seems to suggest the eventual crossing of an event horizon.

Reese explains: "When we originally decided to make Brave Saint into a trilogy, the idea was to create a sort of "three-act" play that quietly told the story of not just four astronauts and their struggle to overcome being lost in space, but to metaphorically chronicle the life of an average Christian. The first album is very upbeat, and about many of the topics one feels in early life, or in their early Christianity. The second is more about overcoming adversity, and later life, and the third is about death, or the end of that journey. The name *ANTI-MERIDIAN* is a play on the word antemeridian, which we usually just abbreviate as A.M., or the morning. We tried to connect all three albums with very visual images of light and darkness, and tried to complete that idea here, by making the great metaphor be about the dawn. But, literally, "anti-meridian" (with an "i"), means "against" or "apart from" the middle, in Latin, because we were also trying to make this album be about later life, and death. It is also, on a personal note, something very much about all of us being older, and not touring any more."

What is also notable about *ANTI-MERIDIAN* is that it was released by the band on their newly formed independent label, Department of Biophysics, after the first two and Reese's solo album, *Roper*, were put out on Five Minute Walk and Tooth And Nail.

"I think that both Tooth and Nail and 5minutewalk put out those albums thinking that because Five Iron sold well, and they assumed it would do better," Reese stated plainly. "I think we were disheartened by the fact that neither label put much effort or money into each album, so we decided to try and have a go at it ourselves with Department of Biophysics. The five-year gap [between the last two BSS albums] is due to my stubbornness: trying to handle as much of the songwriting and recording by myself as I could, when so much of it was way above my pay grade."

THE REAL QUESTION REVOLVES AROUND WHETHER OR NOT BRAVE SAINT SATURN IS GOING TO BE TOURING THIS ALBUM, SINCE MUCH OF FIVE IRON FRENZY'S SUCCESS CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO THEIR PERPETUAL TOURING AND THEIR REMARKABLE LIVE SHOWS.

"Brave Saint Saturn has only played something like eleven shows, and all but one of them has been some degree of disastrous," replied Reese. "We kept having shows booked at the same festivals that Five Iron was playing at, so we would end up practicing in hotel rooms for a few days beforehand, on little practice amps and fake drums. Now, we are trying to put together a way for us to play with tracks, a click track, and a video loop, and if it is successful enough that we can just meet each other at some show and play a good set, we will do it. Right now we are looking at the possibility of playing around 10 festivals next summer, if it will work. Keep your fingers crossed."

One must then wonder, since the initial trilogy is complete, whether there will be any future for Brave Saint Saturn, much less another Roper album.

"The chances of there being another Roper album are hovering somewhere around 3%," Reese responded. "That band was just doomed from the beginning, starting from the moment that the label decided to call it 'Roper.' I wish I could have a do-over on that one, just because I think that musically, it was one of the best bands I have been a part of, and I really enjoyed touring with those guys. The future of Brave Saint kind of hinges on how well this record does. We are trying to leave the door open, but I think that all of us would rather start new projects if this one is done for."

Things wound down with some discussion about Reese's involvement with Showbread and the other artists that he finds to be really excellent. "I actually had never even met the guys before I sang on their first album. They got my email through Tooth and Nail, and sent me a note saying that they were huge Brave Saint fans, and wanted to know if I would do some vocals on their album. I was in San Francisco, recording the *Roper* album, so I drove up to the enormous metropolis that is Weed, CA, and met them. When the album came out, I went and bought it at Best Buy, and was utterly astounded at how great it sounded. We went on tour with them with Roper, and have been friends ever since. I think that they are probably one of the best bands I have ever seen live, and I am seriously jealous of how *Anorexia/Nervosa* came together. Other than Showbread, I believe your fine publication cannot say enough about how amazing House of Heroes is. They are flat out one of the best bands I have ever heard. And, while we're on the subject, I would also like to recommend: The Wrecking, Human Flight Committee, Anberlin, As Cities Burn, and Eleventy Seven."

✖

HOPE FOR THE DYING

BY JONATHAN HARRIS

Hope For The Dying hail from Jonesboro, IL, and though they come from a not so obvious Anytown, USA, their metal is making serious waves. Their full-length record was indeed the first album released by the newly relaunched Strike First Records.

HFTD came together in 2006 as an amalgamation of two former Midwest bands, a high school friendship and a fan. They played together as a four piece, all the while considering adding another shredder. Enter Jack Daniels and his "awesomeness" on lead guitar. By practicing for six hours a day and only living 20 minutes from the band's practice space, he became a solid fit and the lineup filled out to its current state.

At this summer's Cornerstone, a mere 5 hours from the band's home, they played 8 shows in 6 days; a feat of strength for any band. Of the experience, frontman Josh Ditto said, "Playing that many shows was tough, but worth it. Outside of playing, we actually walked around the festival shredding with an acoustic guitar and a ukulele. It was awesome how many people we got to talk to!"

When HFTD isn't melting your face with their melodic double leads, hard hitting drums, booming low-end and passionate vocals, they don't take themselves too seriously. "Nobody is a tough guy," Ditto said. A quick trip over to their MySpace to catch a video blog will prove that they are completely accessible (see video of bass player Jacob Capps introducing the record). Don't mix that up with their work ethic, though. Since the beginning, a strong DIY attitude has always been the focus. James Houseman (lead guitars and background vocals) designs every single one of the t-shirts HFTD sells, Ditto maintains the van when it breaks down, and the band designs and takes care of their MySpace. So, when you send them a message, you can bet they will see it!

When it comes to writing the material HFTD plays and performs, Houseman and Daniels compose the music on their computers with *Guitar Pro*. From there, the band can get a feel for the song and they each add their own respective parts; Ditto and drummer Brice Voyles write the lyrics. "We tend to use lots of imagery and metaphors, but we definitely want to get our message across that there is hope in Jesus Christ," Ditto said, "our inspiration comes from personal life."

HFTD recorded the album in a local studio with the financial backing from some of their friends. They were signed to Strike First after this Summer's tour, by Facedown Records man Jason Dunn. The re-release of the 7-song self-titled album included a re-master and new artwork, both of which the band is very happy with. "We are really into Vikings and whatnot. The 5 skeletons looking into a treasure chest full of light really sums up a 'Hope For The Dying.'" Fans might be surprised though, outside of all the "Metal and Awesomeness," that the band is just a good ol' bunch of nice guys. Ditto mentioned, however, that perhaps the most surprising thing is when touring, it is an unspoken rule that the driver gets to pick the music and Voyles consistently chooses Conway Twitty to soundtrack the drive.

Keep an eye out for Hope For The Dying. Be assured that they will be on the road and looking to drive into new territories. The band will continue to work hard in connecting to their fans with the attitude of "if we don't feel the effects of our hard work the next morning, we didn't work hard enough." Meanwhile, head on over to the Facedown Records merch site or your nearest record outlet to grab a copy of Hope For The Dying for your month's shredding quota.

myspace.com/hopeforthedying

Nobody is a tough guy

THE ASCENDICATE

What is the short history of the band?
Chris Wheat (drums): We got together as The Ascendicate a year or so ago. All of us had been in a few other bands in North Carolina, Missouri, and Tennessee before. We recorded our first CD with Travis Wyrick and then things started taking off.

How did you get involved with Solid State?
Chris: Our producer sent them a few tracks from our recording. It got into the hands of Jimmy Ryan and Ryan Clark and then they flew out to see us to make sure we didn't suck live.

What's it like working w/Ryan Clark? What surprised you? What have you learned?
Ryan Helm (guitar): I was surprised at how eager he was to work with us. Also, the first night that he came down to watch us play, I was thinking to myself, 'Holy crap! This guy has seen and played with some of the best bands out there and now we've got to show him what we are made of.' I was pretty jittery about it, but after we sat and talked for a few minutes I was so at ease, and so was the rest of the band. He's just a down-to-earth kind of guy.
Chris: Ryan Clark is a big teddy bear, who likes his back scratched now and then … but no, he is super efficient and reliable, and also very laid-back and professional at the same time.

How would you describe your sound?
Ryan: (sighs) Oh man, I dread this question! (laughs) I never really know how to answer this one. You could say that we are metal-core, I guess. There is definitely hardcore, metal, and a decent amount of screaming, but there is a lot of singing as well. We also have some acoustical things going on at times, same time it just seems to have this driven sound going on the whole time ... and a nice little ballad as well. The thing about our music is that it is very inspirational, but I think we put a new spin on things, but it's not like we reinvented the wheel.
Eric Marlowe (vocals): Our sound is such a mixture of so many things. It may be easy for some to say, "There's not enough this," or "There's too much of that," but we really hope people can accept this record for what it brings to the table. We love so many different types of music and we like to think that all the different influences will help us bring something fresh to metal.

What are some special moments on your CD?
Ryan: For me, "Burden" is a very personal and emotional song. Long and short of the story is that I was going through a very nasty spiritual battle about a year and a half ago. I know it's a very touchy subject in most churches, but I was dealing with a heavy demonic presence that just would not go away, and it was starting to affect every thing and relationship that I had, especially my marriage, and eventually led to heavy alcohol abuse. I prayed, and fasted for months and finally the burden lifted, but when the battle was done it was so foreign to me, because for the first time it felt like I had nothing to fight, no great war to win, metaphorically speaking. As weird as it may seem, I was going through what felt like a separation anxiety with my pain. Today, I am finally free of that burden in my life, but every time we play that song live, man, I just get this rush of excitement, and it fuels me that much more to be a man that can be a good example, and to never fall back into that place that I used to be in spiritually and emotionally.
Chris: It makes me feel all warm and fuzzy when I hear people singing along and then see them diving into a big ol' pit. I also like it when people yell, "Play some Skynyrd!"

Visit hmmag.com for more interview

myspace.com/theascendicate

Holy crap, Batman!

DECYFER DOWN

Photo: David Molnar

BY MATT CONNER

"The dreaded sophomore slump." Decyfer Down is well aware of this phrase/phase and hopes to avoid the repercussions. Judging by the results, *Crash* seems the proper in-your-face response.

After an impressive debut with *End of Grey* in 2006, the INO Records rock act toured 47 of the continental States ("we forgot about Rhode Island") and parts of Europe as well, relentlessly refining their sound and mission all in an effort to remain in the game and be true to their calling.

"So many bands and artists aren't getting a chance to make a second record," says drummer Josh Oliver. "The market is so bad and so many bands have lost their deals. It's tough to be in a band in the first place, let alone do well and pay bills. So having that experience of *End of Grey* helped us and directed us toward a new appreciation for the process. The whole fact that we were in the studio again was exciting in and of itself and made us really want to tighten up and make it Decyfer Down."

Of course, the identity took a hit in recent months as the band underwent a line-up change up front with vocalist Caleb Oliver leaving the band to attend to family matters.

"When Caleb decided to get off the road full-time, the first person that came to mind was a guy named T.J. Harris," says Josh Oliver. "Literally we've toured all over the country and even internationally and we'd never run across a singer that we all thought, 'Holy cow! This guy can sing! This guy rocks!' So we brought him out to fill in. He and Caleb are very similar as far as power vocals with a lot of rock influence and bluesy, soulful voices which really complements the style we love to play with the heavy guitars and lots of melody going on."

Oliver explains the band – also comprised of Harris and guitarists Chris Clonts and Brandon Mills – learned several things on the road besides the need for hard work and determination in the current climate of the music industry. More importantly, it comes down to the band's heart and character and openness to God. And they had proper mentors for learning such lessons.

"Skillet taught us so much on this last tour," explains drummer Josh Oliver. "No matter how much success comes or how much pressure or attention that people try and get, keep yourself grounded and humble. Allow God to use you no matter how tired or how frustrated or how distracted you are at the time. Being in the business, there are tons of distractions and it's easy to get overwhelmed. Skillet, with all the success they have had and all that's pulling on them, is very approachable and humble and very Christ-centered and that's been such an absolute blessing for us to watch. They've been a great model for our own families and what we want them to be."

All of this leads to a new level of maturity for the members of Decyfer Down. And that, says Josh, will be the primary thing for their fans to notice.

"I think the biggest surprise is going to be the growth as a band that we've had. I think we had a great first record and that we had an amazing recording of that. We developed some great fans out there. As songwriters, we've taken things to the next level. They're deep and impacting. The riffs are that much sicker. The rawness of the record is definitely there. It's not a super-clean and pristine record. It's just a great rock record. I think a few ballads showcase a new depth and taste and hopefully they will be able to impact more people than the first record did. We're definitely excited how much we've grown."

decyferdown.com

What's more important?

PHILMONT

BY JENN SMITH

If you could be any type of pie, what kind would you want to be? Philmont's front man Scott Taube says that he would be apple pie a la mode, because the French phrase "a la mode" translates in English, "with style" (and to think, all this time I had thought it meant "with ice cream"). Philmont's guitarist Josiah Prince's pie of choice would be rhubarb, because no one would want to eat it, er… him. Self-projected pie choices aside, I got to talk to these North Carolina boys, Scott and Josiah, about their band's debut album *Attention* and briefly about how and why Philmont has worked to get where they are today.

This pop punk band, with influences such as Anberlin and Relient K, arose in 2005 from the local music scene in Charlotte, North Carolina. "Well, we were all in bands before Philmont, locally. We had been in those bands for several years, you know, playing around Charlotte and around North Carolina. Those bands kind of broke up all around the same time and we knew each other from the scene and through local music. We decided we wanted to do something new, something fresh," said Josiah. "Those bands were done, but we kind of felt like – we wanted to keep playing music," said Scott.

Following their EP, *Oh Snap*, the full-length debut album *Attention* will be released May 5th. I asked the guys what listeners had to look forward to with the album. "I think they can expect … hopefully, a good record?" laughed Scott, "We're really proud of it. We worked really hard on it – worked really hard on getting the right songs picked out for the album. I think it's a good representation of us as a band." Josiah added, "There's a lot energy behind it. There's fun notes, there's more serious notes. The dynamics are there, from the really heavy songs … not really heavy songs, but the heavier songs – the slower songs. I think that, from start to finish, it's a quality album."

"I've heard the album and I don't think it sucks," chimed Scott. Speaking of more serious notes, Philmont's overall sound may be fun and full of energy, but some of their songs touch on serious spiritual matters like complacency in Christianity. I asked Josiah and Scott to expand a little on those matters. "It's just something that tends to come out in our writing a lot. I think because it is something we've all dealt with. We all kind of grew up in church, in that environment. And we've always lived our lives in that circumstance. So, it is just something that we've all dealt with in our lives – just to, not just trying to get by in our faith as Christians and try to do more with it. You know, to make it something more than just going to church," said Josiah.

Scott added that they want to encourage young people to go after something they want to do to "give to God," so I asked them what they thought was the best outlet to motivate teenagers. Scott answered, "I think it's different for everyone." He then went on to say that people are gifted in different things, like mentoring or teaching and that Philmont uses music, because it is something they are gifted in. They also like to hang out and talk with kids after their live shows. You may or may not agree that Philmont's music is "fresh" or "with style." Nevertheless, Josiah promised that if you come to their show, you will have fun.

myspace.com/philmontrock

with ice cream, too

BELIEVER.

BELIEVER? WHERE HAVE I HEARD THAT THRASH BAND WHOSE EXPERIMENTATION WITH SAMPLING, AND JUXTAPOSITION OF EXTREME METAL THE LANDSCAPE OF METAL AND INFLUENCED BANDS A THE TECHNICAL IN TECHNICAL METAL, REINVENTING ITSELF BE CATEGORIZED. IT'S BEEN 15 LONG YEARS SINCE WE AND SO IT BEGINS AGAIN.

BY CHRIS GATTO

I had the pleasure of interviewing Believer's founders Kurt Bachman (vocals, guitars) and Joey Daub (drums) and previewing material for Believer's upcoming release on Metal Blade at Joey's underground lair. These longtime friends are a paradox of personalities. While playing the new songs for me, Joey would get into each part, almost giggling, like a master immensely pleased with his handiwork. Kurt would sit impassive, reluctant to speak, and simply raise both hands at the end of each song – intent on any response I might have to their new work. With any luck, perhaps the album release will coincide with this issue and you will already have it in your hot little hands, so I will restrain my own observations and suffice it to say that you certainly will not be disappointed.

The band asserts that there never was a grand scheme to resurrect the band, nor is this a reunion in a sense, because the two founders have always been in contact. Besides his day job, Joey stayed in the music field with production work and his prog projects Fountain of Tears and Year of Plenty. Kurt earned a doctorate and works in cancer genetic research. They got together to jam just for fun, much as they had in their middle and high school years, found the chemistry still there, and started writing. The thing snowballed, and now here we are, talking about a fourth Believer record.

When asked about touring plans, the band seems open to possibilities, but quick to admit that extensive tours are probably out for these career and family men now. **Kurt**—"We have no interest in doing that. But yeah, we'll play shows." Both men agree that they'd love to tour with Kreator and Destruction, who've been big influences, and with Sacrifice, whom they toured with for *Sanity Obscure*.

We talked about Believer's musical legacy and Kurt seemed modest and even surprised that so many bands, even outside the metal genre, would call Believer an influence in their music. **Kurt**—"We didn't want to rehash the same stuff; and, with this recording, if we had a crazy idea it was like – 'Let's do it. Why not?'" **Joey**—"The last thing we wanted to do was come in 15 years later and remake the first three albums. We knew that we didn't want to do the orchestra thing again." **Kurt**—"Done that. We never want to be stuck in a category, like – we're a rock symphony band. Then you're limited." Fans know that Believer's lyrics run deeper than the typical thrash metal fare, covering topics as diverse as philosophy, psychology, and black holes. We asked if their current occupations direct the songwriting. **Kurt**—"Everything we write is directly related to what's going on in our lives. There could be lyrics to one particular song that were meaningful to us on the one particular day we wrote it." This leads to a discussion of how people interpret music and their belief in music as art, where each consumer walks away with (**Joey**—"a personal interpretation") of what the piece is about. The band has no problems with each listener taking what they will from the song, even though their interpretations might be vastly different. This becomes part and parcel of the band's agenda: **Joey**—"Think!" In another related discussion Kurt brought up the fact that a musician will listen to one of their songs and have a dozen questions about how they achieved that sound, while someone else just listens and says, "I love that guitar sound," and yet both responses are okay.

The question was asked, "Is there more or less of an urgency now to express your faith as art or as missions in your music?" This elicited a long response from Kurt, starting with: "No. We don't feel an urgency…" that focused on individualism and never actually mentioned words like Christ, church, or salvation. **Joey**—"Kurt and I always had a bond, a commitment to never be something fake, you know – what you see is what you get – which got us in trouble. We are accountable to one person." **Kurt**—"Faith and beliefs are such an individual thing that everybody has to work out, whether you're a satanist, an atheist, an agnostic, whatever… We got bashed and had our shows picketed by religious groups – we were a band without a country. People are more accepting of views now, but we're not out to push things on people." I brought up a comment I saw on a website, where a fan said that the band would never be able to escape certain expectations because of their name. **Kurt**—"That's funny, because our name comes from an Ozzy Osbourne song. The name Believer has so many connotations." They went on to discuss the name Lamb of God and how it means different things to different people. I clarified with, "I think they mean that you'll never escape where you came from." They both chime in: "Oh, we don't want to!" **Kurt**—"We just don't want to be labeled. That's just a media thing. Other bands never really cared how we were labeled. We're really not trying to escape our past." **Joey**—"Everything we've done has followed the path of Believer." **Kurt**—"We just always wanted to keep reinventing ourselves. We were never called an astro–physics band, even though we had songs about that. People take a hold of some things and run with it. The whole Christian metal thing is like an easy label. For Believer – it's entertainment." The phone rings and Joey throws it (the phone) out the door.

There has been some measure of secrecy with this album, probably due to an earlier statement by **Joey**—"We have perfectionist issues." I'm warmed by the fact that I was treated to previews of songs that aren't complete yet, but warned not to include song titles in my story. So I ask, "What exactly do you want to reveal about the upcoming album?" **Kurt**—"It's heavy." **Joey**—"There's elements of each album and also some new elements." **Kurt**—"Keep an open mind. Give it a shot – don't just move on after hearing it once." **Joey**—"Fans close to us have said it sounds like a natural progression from *Dimensions*. People have said that Kurt and my chemistry is still there. It sounds like we never stopped, and that's cool." I ask about

NAME? OH YEAH – THE MONUMENTAL CHAOTIC SONG STRUCTURES, ODDBALL ALONGSIDE CLASSICAL MUSIC CHANGED GENERATION LATER. THE BAND THAT PUT WITH EACH RELEASE AND REFUSING TO HEARD FROM THAT BAND.

timing: "Why now?" **Joey**—"Because Kurt's a loser and realizes he can't just be a scientist. He needs to become Metal Bachman again. (laughing) I've been in music the whole time." Kurt interjects – "Obviously you haven't gotten any better." **Joey**—"Shut up!" **Kurt**—"It's in your blood. You can't get rid of it."

And that's a statement we metalheads can relate to. It was great catching up with Kurt and Joey and exciting to hear what's coming. Be on the lookout for their new album (*Gabriel*) coming very soon on Metal Blade.

✖

Photo: Kelly Bachman

BY SETH WERKHEISER

Impending Doom is en route to Louisiana, continuing a tour with Unearth, Emmure and Born of Osiris that, despite the financial gloom in the air, has seen solid turnouts night after night. It helps when the band can afford an off night in merchandise sales. Last summer the band was spending over $100 for a tank of gas. In early January of 2009 that number is around $40.

A lessened burden on the wallet is nice, though the band still has to put up with the random dude in the crowd flashing them an upside down cross with his arms.

Impending Doom, from Riverside, California, have been serving the Lord with their immense sounding metal, a self-referential nod to "gorship." It's a combination of a thick sludge and gore, and worship, a reverent singing unto the Lord of Lords. It figures that the band's most vocal opponent isn't the secular metal scene, with their pentagrams and inverted crosses. Instead, most of the band's criticism comes from the Christians who consider metal music evil.

The band is made up of vocalist Brook Reeves, guitarists Cory Johnson and Manny Contreras, drummer Chad Blackwell, and bassist David Sittig, whom I had the chance to talk with for this interview.

Soon after forming in 2005, the band self-released an EP, *The Sin and Doom of Godless Men*, followed by *Nailed. Dead. Risen*, through Facedown Records in 2007. The album received a fair amount of good press and hit #46 on the Billboard Top Heatseekers chart.

Such a beginning is solid for any band. A start like this is especially nice for a band who says that bringing the ministry across the world is one of their goals of 2009, along with some touring outside of the States. "We have our passports already for our next two tours," says bassist David Sittig. "They go through Canada and such, we are really excited and anxious to tour outside of the country, if all goes as planned we will be able to tour these wonderful places soon."

With no full-time jobs to support their efforts, and with a woeful US economy, the band is able to earn a modest living by touring and sharing the Good News with kids across the world.

Consider that attitude and the actions from the *Scream The Prayer Tour* last summer. "Talking with kids after the shows there were quite a few people who told us our music has brought them closer to God and has helped them through really rough times," said David. "And that right there is the greatest news."

Also on that tour was Soul Embraced, a band whose members were a part of the mighty Living Sacrifice. Touring with Christian metal legends was an experience for the whole band. "We're all big fans of Living Sacrifice," said Sittig, "so it was awesome hanging out and getting to know those guys."

Aside from spiritual blessings, the band is quite thankful for the climbing sales of metal and loud rock albums in today's music business. A worker is worth his wages, even if that worker is simply playing guitar six nights a week.

And while some of today's metal musicians might not be living in mansions, a certain level of bands are doing well enough to make a modest living. Impending Doom is one of those bands, while remaining fans of Metallica and Slipknot, both of which happened to have huge albums last year.

"The new Metallica record is a lot better than *St. Anger*, but obviously cannot compare with the older stuff," says David. "When I think of good Metallica, I think of *Ride The Lightning* and *Master Of Puppets*."

David considers these mammoth sales a "gateway" to acts like Impending Doom. The more kids that buy a Slipknot album just might lead to more kids coming out to smaller tours in smaller markets across the US. The band will have a chance to find out in February when they hit the road with Bleeding Through, The Acacia Strain and As Blood Runs Black.

Once the boys are back home from their current tour, David will be driving five hours just to see Meshuggah and Cynic in San Franciso. He's a huge fan, and he spoke of playing with Meshuggah at last year's New England Hardcore and Metal Festival, saying it was a blast.

The experience of playing some dates with Soul Embraced, and sharing the stage with Meshuggah, is a lot for any band. Shooting two videos with director Andy Reale is also an accomplishment.

"The video shoot for 'My Nemesis' was a lot of fun," says David. "We had to shoot it at a really slow shutter speed to get the whole chaotic effect which meant we had to rock out really, really slowly, so it was a little difficult and a lot different than anything we have done before." Continues David: "This was our second music video with (Andy) so we were stoked when we heard we would be coming back to him to be doing this video."

And if you're wondering what shirt vocalist Brook Reeves is wearing in the video, wonder no more. Says David, "It's from a Christian clothing company from our home town called INRI Clothing."

Thankfully, for bands, you can't download a shirt. Illegal downloading of entire albums has hurt many bands, Impending Doom included. The band is able to keep afloat with the support of fans each night who buy their CDs and other merch. David tells of a kid who came up to him at a show and said that their album *Nailed. Dead. Risen* was awesome. That's a wonderful compliment for any band, with one small problem; the album wasn't yet released.

"We aren't trying 100% to get rich with the band," says David, "but it's album sales that get us on tours to play for kids, and get bigger recording budgets."

Be sure to catch the band when they come through your town, and pick up the new album, *The Serpent Servant*, which comes out March 31.

✖

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENTS

Photo by: Doron Gild

A BUZZWORTHY AND INDEPENDENT ARTIST NAMED MARK REDDING, WHO PLAYS IN A BAND CALLED THE SHACKELTONS, HAS TAKEN THIS PLATFORM TO SHOUT-OUT THE NAMES AND SHORT DESCRIPTIONS OF SOME OF HIS DESERVING PEERS.

<<The Shackeltons *theshackeltons.com*

Photo by: Melissa Rogers

The Demon Beat>>

Adam, Jordan, and Tucker come from the wild mountains of West Virginia. They all met at Shepherd University a few years ago. This band is for those who love the spirit of the Who, Hendrix, the Black Keys, and the White Stripes. The Demon Beat are some of the funniest and nicest folks you will ever meet.
myspace.com/thedemonbeat

Super Fun Party Time>>

I have found these slow motion vignettes of tenderness sung by gentle guitar and swimming cello and the voices of two young ladies. This group has just been born, and I have seen the future of the calm song. Their first show was at a historical theatre in front of a crowd of 400. It was epic.
myspace.com/superfunpartytime

Don Peris>>

The guitar voice of the Innocence Mission now has his own voice to make the world a better place to live. Don has played in Natalie Merchant's band and has played a bunch of intimate shows with Denison Witmer in the Lancaster, PA, area. I can't begin to explain the beauty of his music and songs. Just listen.
myspace.com/donperis

Blushing Well>>

You have to give props to a family band that has been making prog-rock together for over 15 years. This band is made up of my oldest brother, his three sons, and a daughter in law. They live up to prog-rock standards with the most equipment I have ever seen a band lug around, and a tour bus to drive through the night.
myspace.com/blushingwell

Photo by: Heidi Ross

Brooke Waggoner>>

I once saw her with just a piano in a small club in Nashville. Thought I was having a Billie Holliday moment. She is nothing like Billie, but just as iconic. A few months later I saw her at CMJ in NYC with a full band and string section. It was grand, but all she really needs is her piano to take your breath away.
myspace.com/brookewaggoner

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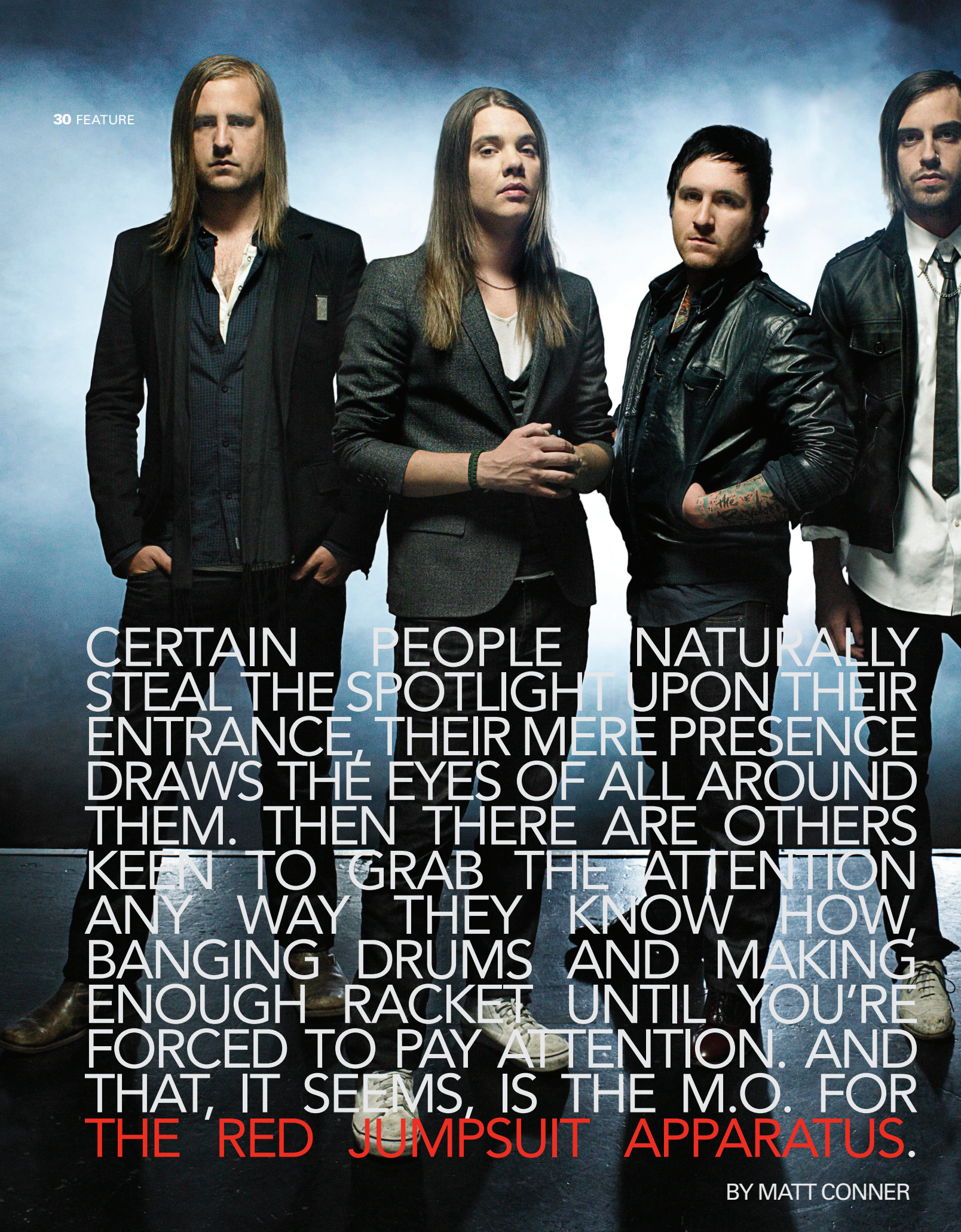

CERTAIN PEOPLE NATURALLY STEAL THE SPOTLIGHT UPON THEIR ENTRANCE, THEIR MERE PRESENCE DRAWS THE EYES OF ALL AROUND THEM. THEN THERE ARE OTHERS KEEN TO GRAB THE ATTENTION ANY WAY THEY KNOW HOW, BANGING DRUMS AND MAKING ENOUGH RACKET UNTIL YOU'RE FORCED TO PAY ATTENTION. AND THAT, IT SEEMS, IS THE M.O. FOR THE RED JUMPSUIT APPARATUS.

BY MATT CONNER

The band's label debut, *Don't You Fake It*, held its share of the spotlight in 2006-7, but mostly because the proverbial string-pullers placed RJA's music in every possible corner. Video game placements (*Saints Row 2*, *Madden '07*), movie soundtracks (*Saw IV*), video airplay and solid radio time for singles like "Face Down" and "Guardian Angel" garnered the band Gold certification and their own headlining gig on the *Take Action Tour*.

So what's a band to do when their debut made such an impact? For Joey Westwood, Ronnie Winter, Jon Wilkes and Duke Kitchens, it's just about enjoying the moment, since that's all they can do anything about.

"There's always that pressure of the sophomore release and what the band is going to do to follow-up their first release," says Westwood. "There's that pressure of how many sales you will have and if it will be close to the first record. I think it's important for us to realize that it's not even important. We're just happy to be there and recording with someone like Howard Benson and his team and knowing we'll get something great out of it for ourselves. Of course, that goes through our minds as we're at home getting ready for the record, but once you're there, you're just realizing that you're blessed to be there and you just record and have a good time."

It certainly helps to have a producer like Benson on your side when you must face up to the pressure of the follow-up. The Grammy Award winning producer is quickly becoming an alt-rock legend, having worked with P.O.D., Flyleaf, My Chemical Romance, Daughtry, among many others. That experience allowed Westwood to feel at ease in the studio and focus only on the music.

"The time in the studio was great. Howard's team were like ghosts. You wouldn't even know they were there unless you needed them and then they were right there for you. You go in and it wasn't necessarily big or fancy, but the guys there are all about the music. They knew their stuff and there's nothing else going on. The vibe was really great. There was never a time when someone would say 'Oh, I can't do this. I'm not feeling it.' It was just going about our business. It was definitely an amazing experience."

Compared to their last studio sessions, Westwood explains that there's not even a comparison, since the first time around, the band was approaching things from a very traditional standpoint.

"The last record, we had all these songs and honestly we just recorded them on the CD. We had a guitar and drums and bass and vocals. We just laid it down like that. This time around we were a little more mature in all aspects of our lives as people, let alone musicians. We had this opportunity to work with Howard and his team, which was great, and have that freedom of knowing we're a bit more mature and understand the in's and out's a bit more. We had this ability to try things that we couldn't before. We could experiment in different ways. Even with the bass, we were trying to record new ways. We had different sounds for different songs. So the whole record from beginning to end, it's such a broader display of musicianship, which is great for us as a band, because it keeps it interesting for us. I really hear something new every time I listen to it, which is neat, because there's more there for you to grab onto."

The new levels of experimentation and maturity aren't the only change for the band, however. Longtime guitarist Elias Reidy recently left the band, although Westwood says the relationship is still undefined as the band gets used to the new line-up.

"We were a band through this whole process holding strong. He was a part of the recording process and then slowly he just wasn't around. He moved out to California and everything is honestly still up in the air. It's not this settled thing yet. It's a location thing more than anything, but that's all that we really know right now. We've been playing a lot of shows without him while he's away. Of course, you can read different things on the Internet, but it comes down to certain things that are hard to explain. Some things you can't pinpoint. People do what they want to do for their own reasons."

Ultimately, Westwood believes the band's identity is bigger than any one individual member, noting that others have come and gone and yet the band continues to march forward. "Obviously if someone's not in the band, of course it will be different when they're not around anymore," Westwood continues. "But this band has been through line-up changes before and they're still the same band. Honestly there's still people from my hometown who work at a local guitar store who used to play in this band and the same vibe still carries out no matter who is in this band. It's really all about the songwriting. There's nothing specific that we're going for, but instead a Red Jumpsuit vibe. Of course, the members are an important thing, but it's bigger than any one member. It's bigger than what we are, than just our names within the band."

Part of the band's ability to keep going amidst the changes or pressures is found in centering themselves on the things that matter most: family, friends and their core beliefs. A two week break before heading back out for touring and promotion gave the quartet a chance to regroup.

"It's different for all of us," says Westwood. "That initial key-in-the-front door moment of seeing my couch and my TV pretty much sets the tone for me to be in my place the next two weeks. It's a good time for us to soak up everything from home and keep that in our memory the best that we can while we're going on the road. For all of us, it's different things. For someone it might be animals or family or just the relaxation of your own bed. It's really about the small things and then you take that to the coffin known as the bus. You want those memories. I grew up in Orange Park my whole life. It's even the street names (that) make you feel at home. It's about your family, which I have a girlfriend and a daughter I care a whole lot about. Like I said, we all have different things. You really have to take in the things that most people take for granted and realize you're not going to see them for months at a time."

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32 ANNUAL

Readers' Poll Awards

Favorite Singer

Ryan Clark (Demon Hunter)
2 Andrew Schwab (Project 86)
3 Aaron Gillespie (The Almost, UO)
4 Spencer Chamberlain (Underoath)
5 David Bunton (The Showdown)

Favorite Drummer

Aaron Gillespie (Underoath)
2 Jordan Mancino (AILD)
3 Lance Garvin (Living Sacrifice)
4 Matt Greiner (ABR)
5 Yogi (Demon Hunter)

Favorite Album

Lost in the Sound of Separation (Underoath)
2 *Anorexia/Nervosa* (Showbread)
3 *Storm the Gates of Hell* (Demon Hunter)
4 *Back Breaker* (The Showdown)
5 *vs. The Anti Mother* (Norma Jean)

Favorite Band

Underoath
2 Demon Hunter
3 August Burns Red
4 As I Lay Dying
5 Living Sacrifice

Favorite Guitarist

Tim McTague (Underoath)
2 Josh Childers (The Showdown)
3 Ben Kasica (Skillet)
4 Rocky Gray (Soul Embraced)
5 Marcos Curiel (P.O.D.)

Favorite Bassist

John Cooper (Skillet)
2 Steven Dail (Project 86)
3 Traa Daniels (P.O.D.)
4 Lee Marie Hostetter (Children 18:3)
5 Mike Herrera (MxPx)

Favorite Album Cover

Back Breaker (The Showdown)
[2] *Lost in the Sound of Separation* (Underoath)
[3] *vs. The Anti Mother* (Norma Jean)
[4] *Storm The Gates of Hell* (Demon Hunter)
[5] *When Angels and Serpents Dance* (P.O.D.)

Favorite Lyricist

Andrew Schwab (Project 86)
[2] Ryan Clark (Demon Hunter)
[3] Aaron Weiss (mewithoutYou)
[4] Josh Dies (Showbread)
[5] Matthew Thiessen (Relient K)

Favorite Live Show

Family Force 5
[2] Skillet
[3] Demon Hunter
[4] As I Lay Dying
[5] August Burns Red

Favorite HM Article

Brian "Head" Welch (Troy Anderson)
[2] *Christian Rock Experiment* (Mark Salomon & Tom Denlinger)
[3] Showbread (Josh Dies)
[4] Underoath (Andrew Schwab)
[5] Norma Jean (Brian Quincy Newcomb)

Favorite Unsigned Band

Blessed Is He
[2] Ilia
[3] Sophia
[4] Write this Down
[5] Hope For The Dying

Favorite New Band

Children 18:3
[2] Oh, Sleeper
[3] The Famine
[4] Trenches
[5] Brian "Head" Welch

THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA

Photo: Adam Ernaklas

The Devil W

GROUND CONTROL TO MAJOR LABEL

BY DOUG VAN PELT

"I THINK A LOT OF PEOPLE TALK ABOUT HOW WE'RE SPOILED OR HOW WE DON'T HAVE TO WORK HARD OR WE'D HAD THINGS HANDED TO US," REPEATS GUITARIST JEREMY DEPOYSTER, "AND THAT'SREALLYNOTTRUE.WEVEWORKED REALLY HARD FOR EVERYTHING WE'VE

ears Prada

GOTTEN AND WE'VE GIVEN UP OUR LIVES AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER TO DO THIS AND I THINK A LOT OF PEOPLE SEE MAYBE THE SUCCESS AND THE SHOWS THAT WE HAVE NOW AND KIND OF ASSUME, 'OH, THEY'RE JUST LUCKY.'

Photo: Adam Elmakias

"In certain aspects, obviously, we are, but also at one point in time we chose to do this and to do it simply because we love God and we love music and we weren't making any money. We were actually spending money out of our pockets that we didn't even have and eating peanut butter sandwiches. It really wasn't that long ago. I guess people that see us as that kind of thing – it's really not who we are. We're still the same dudes we were three years ago or four years ago – before any of this happened."

Such is the criticism that just about any successful person faces from bystanders. One sad byproduct of becoming bigger is that you become a bigger target. As soon as your band's music gets sold in a Hot Topic, for instance, one segment of the modern music population writes you off.

When speaking of misconceptions, if DePoyster and his five bandmates had their choice, "I guess my ideal perception of it is just six dudes that, for whatever reason, God has chosen us to do this band and we've been blessed with all this success and we're really, really grateful. We're just stoked to be doing it as long as we can."

This six-member band from Dayton, Ohio certainly has a lot to be thankful for. Their 2006 Rise Records debut, *Dear Love: A Beautiful Discord*, and the many live shows that followed quickly built an enthusiastic fanbase. 2007's follow-up, *Plagues*, took things up another notch, and now their third full-length promises even more with the larger Ferret Music label behind them.

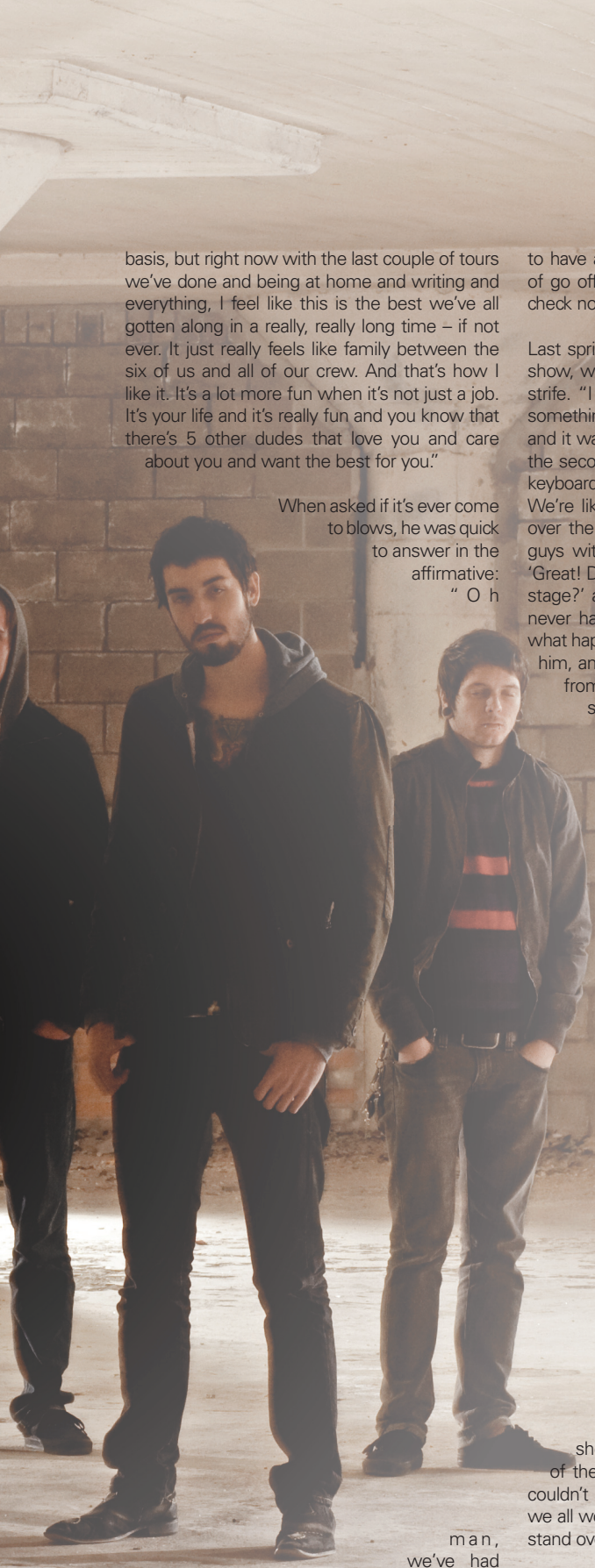
The band's confidence level is high, but they've got several things that help them stay humble. First, there's God: "We're constantly being shown on a daily basis that, anytime we get too confident, God kind of like yanks things away from us and gives us a show like we're kids or something," admits DePoyster. "It's like, 'Oh, okay, we need to get back to what's really important,' and stuff like that."

Secondly, they've got friends and family that are ever helpful in putting them back in their place. They'll be out on the road, where enthusiastic supporters will greet them and ask for their pictures to be taken with them, "but as soon as I get home," the guitarist finishes, "my friends are like, 'I don't give a crap about your band at all!' They don't care about my band. They've known me way before that and it's just funny to them. I'm a really goofy guy. I'm kind of a dork and I've always been perceived that way by my friends, so, that really, really helps to keep me in check, personally, at least – to come home and just be like – not only one of the guys, but a dorky one of the guys. It just helps put it in perspective, ya know? No matter what happens with the band or anything, I'm still just a dude."

Third, there's conflict. When asked how his band of six manages to get along, he admits that they *don't* exactly get along. He laughs when describing it, and he tempers the description with the fact that it's easier now that they have a great big bus, "…with space and a bunk you can go hide in if you're mad at somebody. It's like any other band. We fight all the time and bicker about little things. This guy's mad at that guy and then they're cool, but he's mad at this guy, but I think overall we know that we have a common purpose to serve God with what we're doing … I'm not sure how it would work in a secular band. I've never really been in a real, touring secular band. I've only been in this one... We don't really have any issues with ego and stuff like that, because we all kind of keep each other in check: 'We're not doing anything cool here, we're not doing anything good here, this is all God working through us.' That kind of keeps that stuff down, but obviously with six different people, there's six different personalities and 500 things that you hate about each person when you see them on a daily

Photo: Adam Elmakias

basis, but right now with the last couple of tours we've done and being at home and writing and everything, I feel like this is the best we've all gotten along in a really, really long time – if not ever. It just really feels like family between the six of us and all of our crew. And that's how I like it. It's a lot more fun when it's not just a job. It's your life and it's really fun and you know that there's 5 other dudes that love you and care about you and want the best for you."



When asked if it's ever come to blows, he was quick to answer in the affirmative: "Oh man, we've had quite a few fist altercations and all that fun stuff, but nothing really, really serious – at least not in a long time. It's kind of like a daily thing for us. There's always somebody yelling at somebody else or whatever. I used to have a really bad temper and I used to kind of go off a lot, but I've learned to keep that in check now."

Last spring the band had a brief scare during a show, which they thought was a result of band strife. "I forget where we were at ... Texas or something… We started playing at this club and it was a really good show and I think it was the second song, maybe, we look over and our keyboard player was gone. His name's James. We're like, 'Uh, what?' We kind of had a fight over the last couple of days – a couple of the guys with him and so my initial thought was, 'Great! Did he get so mad that he walked off the stage?' and 'What are we gonna do? This has never happened to us before.' We don't know what happened, so we just keep playing without him, and then we stop and he walks back out from outside onto the side of the stage he's sitting there holding his eye. And it's, like, bleeding, for some reason, the angle I looked over at, I could have swore his eye was, like, hanging out of the socket and so I'm just thinking, 'Oh my gosh! His eye's out of the socket! I don't know what we're gonna do.' But I guess it was just really badly hurt. I guess in the song before he had gone over to the drums and was headbanging and had smashed his eye into the kick drum mic, so then he had to go to the hospital and get it all patched up. He couldn't see right, because of the way he had hit it, so for the next four or five shows he had to just stand on the side of the stage with his keyboard, because he couldn't even really see to play it very well, so we all would just kind of go, 'Ha ha! You have to stand over here!'

Now it's a little clearer why the band stays in a state of tension!

"That was a bloody experience. He always gets hurt, though. He's probably been hurt more than anybody else. There was a period of time where every other week he would hurt his head or his hand or something. He flails around a lot, I guess."

A fourth major factor that keeps The Devil Wears Prada grounded would be its good sense of humor. "I think it's one of the most important things," DePoyster explains, "just because, you know, when you start to take yourself and your life and your band too seriously, you kind of get egotistical and you get bitter and you lose the fun that you can really have touring – and that's when bands turn into sour people. I think we're the most immature bunch of kids that you could find (laughs) and it makes our lives a lot more fun because of it. I think that's definitely one of the most important things about being on tour and being in a band – is humor."

THE NEW ALBUM

Between *Plagues* originally being released in August of 2007 and then re-released as a *Special Deluxe Edition* last Fall, TDWP became probably the best-selling band on the Rise Records roster. The band had finished its two-album obligation and felt like they'd rather be at a label where they weren't its biggest act.

"I think we're the most immature bunch of kids that you could find…"

"We had a few talks with some major labels and stuff like that, but that really doesn't fit the mold of what we've done as a band. We kind of do everything ourselves in our own way. Especially being a Christian band on secular labels, it's really important that we don't have somebody telling us what to say or what not to say about faith-based stuff and everything like that. We kind of felt more comfortable with Ferret where, it's a bigger label and they have a lot more resources – they can do a lot more for us – but still an independent label, where we still have full control over our image … what songs we use and everything like that.

"It was a smooth transition between the two.

"We met Carl from Ferret a few times and we really hit it off with him. He's an awesome guy. He seemed really stoked about the band, and that's really important for us and the people that work for us. I don't want to be on some major label with a bunch of old dudes that don't care about my band. If I don't sell a million records…"

Carl Severson is also pretty happy about the

Continued on page 45

You've heard of the Whopper Virgin, but the guys from A Plea For Purging just found out that their producer, the much-sought-after Joey Sturgis, was like a Taco Bell virgin. It wasn't exactly his first trip to the "Think Outside the Bun" fast-food chain, but let's just say that Sturgis was more a Golden Arches kinda guy.

"WE HAD TO, LIKE, TALK HIM THROUGH A COUPLE THINGS WITH TACO BELL," EXPLAINS VOCALIST AND FRONTMAN FOR THE FACEDOWN RECORDS METALCORE BAND, ANDREW ATKINS, "AND WE MADE HIM GET A VOLCANO TACO, BECAUSE WE WERE ALL WAY STOKED ON THE VOLCANO TACOS RIGHT NOW AND THE LAVA SAUCE." APPARENTLY HIS HEAD DIDN'T SMOKE LIKE THE DUDE ON THE COMMERCIAL, BUT THE FOURTH MEAL STRANGER WASN'T AT ALL IMPRESSED. "THAT WAS A REALLY GOOD TIME."

Photos by Blake: 1) Andy freazing up on some vocal tracks. 2) Long hours of tracking guitars has really taken its tole on Blake. 3) Blake gettin "hev" tracking some guitars.

BY DOUG VAN PELT

And that about sums up how normal the guys from A Plea For Purging are. Granted, not every frontman will urge his fans to start a letter-writing campaign to Taco Bell in an effort to keep his beloved lava sauce even after the Volcano Taco gets discontinued. But a Christian hard music scene can thank the good Lord that the fickle nature of fast-food menu items isn't applied so liberally to band rosters as strong as the one on Facedown Records.

With their debut album, *A Critique of Mind and Thought*, this Nashville quintet immediately and ferociously showed that they were purveyors of a type of brutally fast and heavy metal that could satisfy even a manly man's musical appetite. As good as that album was, though, the band admits it was a rushed product.

This time, however, the band took time off from the middle of August until the end of the year to really put a lot of work into it. "We're really stoked," explains Atkins. "We just really wanted to put as much time and as much thought into it – lyrically, spiritually, musically." The band headed to a lake house near New Concord, KY, owned by their bass player (John Wand)'s parents. "It's like the smallest little blip on the map. It's so small, but we got away from everything and lived in this basement of this lake house for, like, three months and just wrote all day every day. Wrote more songs than what we needed for the record, so we could really pick and choose the best songs for it. We think we're coming out with something really good. The lyrical content and direction that the record is going is a lot different than the last record. We're really trying to touch on topics that we feel like Christian bands as a whole don't really speak about, including ourselves. Like, on the last record and everything we've done previously. It just seems like it's really easy to sing about, 'Oh, how good God is' and the normal, like, spiritual warfare stuff, and how God always prevails, which is true. Our God is huge and He's big. But this record talks a whole lot about actual sin and actual things in our lives that we're battling and the feelings that we have against other people when their sins seem to make their way into our lives.

"It was a very emotionally-draining process to try to write the record, because we wanted to be as honest and true as possible on this record, and really help talk about our lives." Atkins admits that confession of sin isn't something done haphazardly or just dumped on any random person in the street, but still feels like there's a lot of honesty missing in our relationships with other believers. "We feel like as Christians that's what we're supposed to be to each other. We're supposed to be open and able to talk about our lives with each other, so that we can hit that next step, which is accountability. So, that whole record is basically about life without God and where you take yourself alone in your little dark places. It's all about finding yourself in depravity."

Depravity, it turns out, is the title for the new album, which was recorded at Foundation Studios in Connersville, IN, with Joey Sturgis. "He is making this record sound so heavy," Atkins describes with not just a hint of delight in his voice. Lots of bands say that sort of thing, but these guys took that big low end sound a step lower. "We've tuned down," he admits. "We used to play in Drop-D. Now we're Drop-B. We're trying to play a little bit heavier music and just really have a whole different feel and mood to this record than we did on the last record.

"We seem to have a problem with just writing riffs and riffs and riffs and then putting them together and they just sound like a bunch of riffs in a song as opposed to a song. So, at first it was really hard to get back into the mode of writing, because we tour so much that basically all our minds are just focused on touring, being on the road, playing the songs that we have. So, when you go from doing that from 280 to 300 days straight and then you have to hit this totally new mindset of, 'Okay, now we're creating,' it's just kind of weird for us. It was seriously such a blessing to really hash out songs and we went about this record a lot different, from starting it from Blake, our guitar player. He's basically the primary songwriter when it comes to music. He kinda hashed out a ton of riffs and a ton of songs and wrote it on a computer a lot with some drum programs, where he could get a vision for the song before he actually brought the song to the band. Then we'd take the song and play 'em as a full band and all the guys would put their influence in musically and things would change. Blake would go back and re-write the song. It was really a lot of going back and forth to the drawing board, per se."

Atkins applies this teamwork ethic to even the pronunciation and tone of his vocals. As they were in the demo stage of pre-production, he would often stop while tracking and ask his bandmates, "'Am I screaming this low enough?' Or, 'Am I screaming this part high enough?' I really get everyone else involved and ask them to really pay attention. This isn't my band. It's four other dudes in our band (that) have just as much say about my vocals as I do."

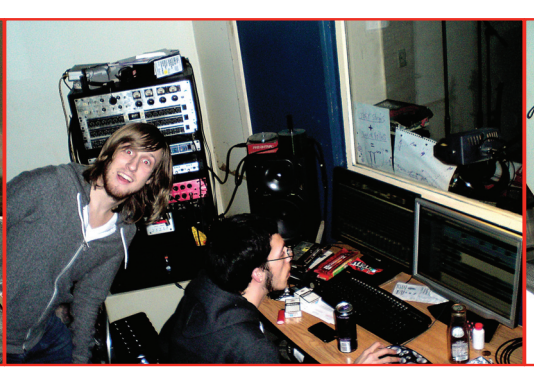
By the time the band has gotten to the end of the recording, when they're laying down vocals, there's a lot less to think about due to all the demo work they've already recorded and listened to. They know what they want now and they just go in and do it.

It's not easy, of course, to go into an isolated room and sing your brains out – especially when you're used to romping around on a stage with flying bodies and kids jumping around and hardcore dancing going on all around you. It's gotta be weird to recreate that feeling or mood when you're in a sound-proof room. "I close my eyes a lot," Atkins reports. "This time around we're working with a different microphone than I've ever worked with before. I'm getting to hold it, which is cool, compared to standing in front of a pop screen thing. So, that's been really cool. It's called a Shure SM-7. That feels way sweeter than standing in a room by yourself and just yelling real loud into thin air."

As soon as the band finished tracking *Depravity*, they jumped back out on the road to start supporting it, but with a different mindset. Prior to taking time off from the road last August, they had a road revelation that put their mindset into perspective. Prayer and Bible study and personal growth as men of God can easily take a back seat when you're fighting for sleep and becoming more and more consumed with things like merch sales and bigger and better tours. "Basically," finishes Atkins, "we realized that we're five Christian men before anything else. Before being in a band, before the professionalism of the band or business or anything like that, we're Christians."

Continued on page 48

4) Joey "I got rubberband banks in my pocket" Sturgis. Andy's view from the vocal booth. How could this not be a gold record?! 5) Joey making a Gold record. Tyler doing what he does best, nothing! 6) Sturgtron 2008. Our producer is better than your producer.



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The Devil Wears Prada | cont'd:

new arrangement: "Hooking up with The Devil Wears Prada was one of those perfect instances where you go with your gut and it just works. Well before the band released their second Rise album, *Plagues*, I saw them play in NJ and spent some time hanging out with them. They were young and excited and seemed to honestly enjoy what they were doing. They weren't looking for anything, weren't trying to milk their budding 'fanbase,' they didn't use the word 'fan' (I'll explain how much I hate that word and its overuse another time), they just wanted to do their thing and have a good time doing it. I didn't push them for anything, rather we just talked about music and whatnot and went our separate ways. Ferret signed them shortly thereafter. I think for them they knew they had a home that appreciated their music and they didn't have to weather the storm of potential suitors they would have had they waited until after *Plagues*, yet they still got to write their own ticket. For Ferret they're the kind of band that we want to work with – a band that wants someone to work 'with,' not someone to do everything for them. They've proven they are more than capable of forging their own path. With Ferret's help we can raise their ceiling and grow the band, but they aren't looking for someone to do all the work for them. That's a quality in an artist that you don't find as much in the 'myspace' era of music. Kids didn't sweat it out in basements and fight for it. They recorded a record without a band on a computer in their room and built an audience via friend requests ... which I feel is really as soulless as it sounds."

For this new album, the band decided to work with Joey Sturgis as a producer for the third time. "We had a bunch of dudes that we were talking to (about producing) and we could have fit 'em all within our budget, I think," explains DePoyster; "but for us, everything we've done in the band has been kind of weird. We're just kind of on a more DIY level, we get all our own crew ourselves and we try to handle all that stuff ourselves and we did our last two records (with Joey). We did 'em basically in the garage and you wouldn't really expect it from hearing 'em or seeing 'em or anything like that, but that was the environment we did 'em in and it was actually a real comfortable environment, because we became really good friends with Joey and we could do basically what we wanted with the record.

"I was kind of scared that, if we went with somebody else – maybe a Hollywood style or somebody in one of these bigger studios, it might be too sterile of an environment for us to do what we really wanted to do. We're not the kind of band that goes into the studio with a really unpolished record of 12 songs and says, 'Here, produce these and make these really, really good songs for us.' When we go into a studio, what comes out in the end is really similar to what we go in with, just because we have such a long writing process and we really kick each other's butts about what songs are being played and transitions and stuff like that. I kind of just felt like it was a combination of: it would be too sterile if we went with somebody else; we wouldn't be comfortable enough to get a good, solid record out; and I really trust Joey and he's always had the best sound for us and I know that he understands exactly where we're coming from as a band, just because he's been involved with us since our first demo recording. It just kind of made sense, I guess."

"Between the keyboards and some of the guitar parts, the prettier parts are a lot prettier."

Every band worth its weight says the same thing when describing its latest album (and we should be worried if they don't), when they state that it's their best work. DePoyster doesn't disappoint or surprise us there: "I was kind of worried, just because we've been doing some stuff in the back lounge of our buses on our mini-headline tour and our Warped Tour and stuff and I was like, 'I don't know how this is going to go, compared to the old stuff,' but as soon as we got home and really started working on them … I don't know. I think it's similar enough that anybody that likes the old stuff will definitely still like it – the same ideas and the same themes and stuff – and it's still a real heavy sound, but some parts of it are even heavier than the old stuff and some parts of it are more melodic now.

"When we wrote the last record, we had two guys still in high school and we hadn't been on most of the tours that we have now. We hadn't been playing together for nearly as long as we have now. Now it's kind of like, when Chris and I start writing guitar parts and going through stuff, it just molds really real well together. We kind of have a bigger understanding of what we're going for sound-wise and stuff. I think everybody that's already been a fan will hopefully still like it and maybe it will be their new favorite record from us, but I think it will open the door to some people that might not have given it a chance before – either on the heavy side or the lighter side.

"We've done a few songs in drop-B tuning, which is something we've never done before. We've always just played in drop-D tuning. So, I think it gives some of the songs a way different characteristic from stuff we've done before, where it's a lot heavier in certain aspects, but then on the melodic parts, because it's a lower tuning and stuff, sounds a lot eerier, I guess, which is cool. I think between Chris, our other guitar player, and I – I think our parts are meshing a lot better than they have before, like he's doing a lot of really cool leads over chord progressions and stuff. Overall, I think the sound is a lot fuller than it was. If I go back and listen to *Plagues* and I compare it to the new songs that we're writing, it just seems like there is almost a layer or two missing from *Plagues* that's now there filled in on the new record. I think people will be stoked about that. I think also we're trying to get more creative with our breakdowns and stuff like that. Vocally, I know Mike is doing some different styles of screaming and stuff that he's done before. I'm going to try and separate my singing parts from stuff on the last album. It's not that I'm not happy with the way they turned out, but I think I just don't want to do ten more songs with the same choruses and singing parts that we did last time, so I'm going to try to do things a little differently, and see how that goes."

The only thing Jeremy DePoyster has to really worry about now is losing his job. With a bigger budget to hit the road with, all the members have new in-ear monitors with their own, custom mix. "I'm pretty sure I'm gonna get kicked out," he laughs really loud, "when they start hearing some of the stuff I'm playing at shows."

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A Plea For Purging | cont'd:

"We have a few songs that really touch on hiding your sin, hiding who you are from your family and friends and just a little bit about our band. We're five guys that live together all day long, every day, like 300 days a year we're together. And it's crazy how you can be so close to each other, but yet keep such a distance in your own life. We really had this turning point mid-summer this year, where we had to really get some things right internally with our band and our relationships together and decided, if we're gonna be a ministry, we're gonna be five Christians that are in a band together that are trying to reach other people, we have to, first and foremost, be honest and open with each other.

"We just kind of realized that the five of us should be holding each other accountable and we should be strengthening each other, not just calling out each other's faults or sins or anything, but caring about one another and asking about the sin in each other's lives, asking about how, you know, your relationship with Christ is. Having Bible study together, praying together. These are all things that you would think would be very natural on a very daily basis in a Christian band, but what a lot of kids don't realize with other people is that you may start out all awesome like that, but once you get out on the road and you're on the road all the time, all you think about is business, business, business. 'What's the next tour going to be like? Are we gonna make enough money on that next tour to put gas in our tank and to pay our bills? Are we gonna get a record out in time? And how many records are we gonna sell, so we can get on a better tour?' So, all these things are on your mind, and the last thing you think about is your personal relationship with Christ or how your bud's doing. It basically just hit us one day. It was just a realization of, 'Holy crap! All we care about is band business. All we care about it is, you know, that whole side of our band, when it really is, for us, the reason we started doing this was to be a ministry and to be able to reach kids and hopefully make a difference in some lives and to learn about our own lives.'

"But, yeah man, we just had this day where we're like, 'It's now or nothing. We're gonna start working on this. We're gonna grow together like we used to be, or we're not gonna be a band anymore and we're gonna go home and work on our relationships with Christ, because that's more important than playing a show to a couple hundred kids every night or something.' It was really a growing spot in our band. It could have maybe been the end of the band. It wasn't even kind of like I'm mad at this dude or this dude's mad at me or nothing like that. It was really just as simple as it sounds, where we don't care about each other. We're not asking about each other's lives. We're not pushing each other to be greater men of God. We're just a bunch of dudes in a band together, and we didn't want that.

"So, there's a couple songs that are really about that – that are about growing together as a band and about being honest with your friends and keeping your friends closer than your enemies. A couple of those songs, "Prevaricator" is pretty much about that. There's another song called "Miss Anthropy," that's pretty much what that song is about. The title track of the record, "Depravity," is pretty intense. It's pretty much about feeling like you're all alone and feeling like God's left you and that you're… No matter what any Christian says, there's been a time in their life where they've questioned their relationship with Christ and questioned God's existence. I think if you don't do that sometimes, there's something wrong – you're not challenging yourself and you're not growing and understanding why you say you have this relationship with God. "Depravity" is really just about feeling alone and feeling like God's left you, when really you realize that you've left God, that you've turned your back on your relationship with God.

"We're just really simple dudes. Pretty much, for the most part, all of us grew up – in different ways – in church and were Christian youth group kids and listened to Bleach and Skillet and all that. You know, played in our church praise bands and played Steven Curtis Chapman songs and stuff. We're a metal band that has a good time. We're just a bunch of dudes playing loud music."

✖

[For more of this interview, go to hmmag.com]

What **Dragonforce** Says

DRAGONFORCE IS A VERY FOCUSED AND INTENSE BAND. THEIR BRIGHT AND INTRICATE METAL SONGS ARE TOTALLY SERIOUS MUSICALLY. IF YOU CAN SIMPLY MAKE IT THROUGH THEIR HYPER-SPEED HIT, "THROUGH THE FIRE AND THE FLAMES" IN "EXPERT" MODE ON *GUITAR HERO III* (MUCH LESS HIT ALL THE NOTES), YOU ARE TRULY A SHREDDER. IMAGINE HOW TALENTED YOU MUST BE TO PLAY IT ON A REAL INSTRUMENT. IT SHOULD COME AS NO SURPRISE, THEN, THAT GUITARIST HERMAN LI MIGHT NOT BE AS JOVIAL AS OTHER ARTISTS HAVE BEEN IN THE PAST ... OR WILLING TO TACKLE VARIOUS AND SCATTERED SUBJECTS. TRY AS HE MIGHT, EDITOR DVP COULD NOT GET THE GUITARIST TO OPEN UP AND TALK SPIRITUAL. READ ON AND SEE WHAT THEY DID TALK ABOUT.

What are your favorite places in the world to play in and why?
Herman: (laughs) I don't know. I guess anywhere that has people that understand what we're talking about. You know, when you're talking to people after the show, before the show, it's good to talk to people that understand and speak the same language. Apart from just the interaction on the stage, but off the stage as well. There's so many cool places. I can't really name any that I would say, "That's my favorite." Japan is cool. US is cool. Sweden. Like I say, they're all different.

What is the hardest Dragonforce song for you to perform? Why?
The hardest ones are always the new ones from the new album. We haven't played them that often, compared to songs that we've played a lot. It was hard at first, but now it's really easy, because you've played them so many hundred times already. There's always a new song from the latest album, which are harder to play than the old ones.

In your opinion, what is the value or importance of mythology in a song's lyrics?
What's the value in it? There could be value, there could be no value. It depends on the lyrics. It depends on the band or what people are trying to write. It doesn't have to be an internal thing when you write lyrics.

What are your favorite myths?
Myths? To be honest, I'm not really a fantasy kind of guy, but the myths I can say is the myth of people who always say, "You come to these places and there's girls and (bleep) loads of this and that." I think it's all a rock myth made by, exaggerated and invented by television and movies. That's why I call it myth.

It's really the band Manowar that created those myths.
(silence)
I don't know. There's all kinds of bands. I don't know who or whatever kind of bands created the kind of myths people imagine what it's going to be like when they go on tour and things like that. 'Is it really true or not?'

I was just kidding about my Manowar reference, because they're kind of over the top with that.
Yeah, I think they're over the top in the same way that a lot of bands, but just on a different subject. Some bands say, "We (do) about 10 girls a night," and some bands say, "We're more metal than anyone else on the planet."

It gets to be silly after awhile.
Yeah, it's all a bit silly. It's all a bit funny.

How would you compare, for instance, a Greek mythological tale like Zeus with the story about Moses delivering the Hebrews from Egypt and Pharoah?
I can't really comment on those things, to be honest. I'm not really an expert on those things. So, I shouldn't open my mouth or I'm going to hear, "Oh, he's an idiot! What did he say? Blah, blah, blah. That's not even that." I have views on music and guitars, so I can answer those questions better. Giving you a half answer trying to be intelligent, trying to say I know something about mythology and stuff is not good.

Good point. Rank the following 3 guitarists in order of greatness:
Uli Jon Roth;
Frank Marino;
Michael Schenker.
Ah, well, I'm going to start some hate! To be honest, I don't think there's… This is really the truth. You put different guitarists in different environments, the rates go up and down, because everyone has different skills and they're good at this kind of thing. You put a certain guitar player in a different kind of … they're all going to be better or worse. So, I can't really say. If you put them all in some sort of Jazz music, they're all probably going to be rubbish. No one's better than the other. They're all different styles.

Okay, I'll give you one more chance. I had another list of three guitar players and you can say the same thing if you want to, but I'll just throw it out there:
Jimi Hendrix;
Eric Clapton;
Jimmy Page
You're forcing me to do this. I'm going to put Jimi Hendrix first. Eric Clapton second. And Jimmy Page third. In a sense of how much I've listened to them – in those three guitarists; not what I think, 'Who's better?' Who's better at what? I think Clapton's better at certain things than Hendrix. Hendrix does some things better in another thing and Jimmy Page writes better songs sometimes than the other guys.

I hear ya. What are your favorite and least favorite things about new technology?
I think new technology is great. Unfortunately, I think it's new to a lot of people in the world who shouldn't have new technology. (laughs) If this makes sense?

What do you mean by that?
Some people… I recently asked a friend of mine that works in computers, "Have the human civilization improved in computer skills after all these years of technology?" He actually said, "No. They're trying to make computers easier, but actually made it worse. It makes people use less work than computers by trying to make things easier. It's not that you learn anything."

How significant was the success of the band The Darkness to your band's ability to succeed?
Zero.

Why so?
I think we play a totally different type of music. I mean, you're talking about comparable, and our audience is totally different as well. Obviously, they have some kind of audience, but they are more kind of a mainstream band. And I would say a lot of people that bought the record, but they're not really rock or metal kind of people. They just bought the album at that time, because it was kind of a trendy thing to listen to. I lived in the UK. I can only say, "We play a totally different music." Them getting bigger doesn't make us bigger or anything.

In a practical sense, how do you create and compose music when you are on tour?
We simply do not compose any music when we are on tour. We just don't do anything like that. We usually… We always do it after, when we're off tour. We just do not have enough time or concentration. There's always distractions, people walking in and out of the dressing room, people walking in and out of the bus, visitors all want to say, "Hello." They all want to come and drink a beer. They all want to hang out, so it's really difficult doing something, not just writing music, but some basic thing that requires your attention.

Take us through each of your albums and comment briefly on them:
Valley of the Damned (2003) We basically finished writing all the songs in early 2001, so I guess when it came out in 2003 it was two years down the road.

It was not until the second album, *Sonic Firestorm* (2004), that I think really captured the sound and took a snapshot of the band at the right time. I thought *Sonic Firestorm* is the one that really kind of took us and showed our originality compared to all the other bands out there.

Inhuman Rampage (2006) The third album. That reinforced that thing with the originality of Dragonforce. From the second album onward, we had a really unique sound that really separated us. People can recognize it better. Some people couldn't recognize us as different from something else until the second album.

Ultra Beatdown (2008) The fourth one, that's the latest one. We spent the most time working on. We spent a year and a half writing the songs and seven months in recording it. I guess that's been our most successful one now.

What's an example of a typical life of the creation of song from beginning to end?
Well, let's say, "Ultra Beatdown," (from) the new album. It took a year and a half to write the songs, so that's how long it took. While we were recording, we spent seven months recording. As we were recording, we were still changing and writing the songs and altering and trying to make it better. Even when we were mixing the album, we still changed the song if it doesn't sound as good as the other songs. They all have to work as well as the others. We always said, "We haven't written our best song." People say, "Through The Fire And Flames" is our best song. I don't think so. I think all the other songs are as good as "Through the Fire and Flames," it's just that it happens to be the most famous one. Because it was the first single and in the game, *Guitar Hero III*.

Speaking of, how does it feel to have one of your songs on a Guitar Hero game?
Oh, it's great! It definitely helped the band in a way that we didn't expect it to. Because it's a different audience that wouldn't usually hear the music. It's really great. It's cool.

Have you and the guys played it much?
A couple of us have the game, but we don't really have time to play that. I finished the game a while ago, a couple months ago. We don't have time to play the game. We don't want to play our own song all the time on it. We play that song every day pretty much every show.

As a professional musician, how would you comment on the game as a form of entertainment?
Well, a game is a game. It's not like the real guitar. If you want to have the feeling of the real guitar playing in a band, you have to play an instrument – the real thing. It's like a fantasy, a video game, like *Halo*. *Guitar Hero* is another fantasy. You can be playing on a stage in front of thousands of people without actually getting off your sofa. Isn't that cool? We don't need to play the game, because we do it every day anyway on tour. But it takes many years to be able to do something like that.

How much of a challenge is electrical standards in various international venues? You know, the different electricity and just the way that varies from country to country. How much of a challenge does that present for you as a live band?
Umm, we usually take our own equipment now these days on tour, so it's always pretty okay now. In the old days, it was more difficult when we were smaller. But now we're a big enough band to take everything ourselves, including the PA speakers, so that problem's been solved. On this current world tour, it's been working great. It's harder for smaller bands, because they don't have enough money and a budget to have such high tech equipment to travel with them around the world.

If you found evidence that the resurrection of Jesus Christ were true, what would that mean for you?
I'd rather not comment on anything religious. How 'bout that? That's my answer. Yep. I don't want people, maniac-like hitting me or whatever. Everyone's got their different view. You hear these kind of political, you know, religious stuff on tv all the time. It's not really up to us. It's not our job as musician or entertainer to be talking about this kind of thing. So, let's let the people that actually enjoy talking about this their whole life everyday deal with it.

Well, speaking of, going from religion to politics, what is your prediction and hope for America with its new president?
Ahh (laughs). I can't. I'll give you the same boring answer! I guess people want changes. People always want hope, so I guess it's good that people have hope. If that's what they're looking for, whatever. I'm not really an expert in US politics and stuff like that.

What is one of the biggest lies ever sold to our culture? And what is a little known truth that is somehow being overlooked or buried?
In a culture? I guess every country, they have their history lessons. I don't know if that's the right answer, but they always talk about the good things, not the evil things too much. I guess that's one thing for sure that can be taught in each country's past – more of the evil stuff they've done to other countries, not only the golden things.

How much is the visual and image to your music in a live setting?
Of course, we think music is the most important thing; but when you're performing live as a band, you look at everything, from lights, what color the lights are to what it sounds and looks on stage. So, everything is important. But we never forget about the importance of the performer, the

musician playing. You can have the pyro, you can have the lights, you can have a massive stage, but all these are really… it's not real if, I mean, by the musician performing well and having interaction and eye contact or having a connection with a crowd. That is most important. All the lights and stuff are just about paying money – dishing out money. So, I think it's most important having the musicians working – working hard during the show and not just rely on the decorations.

From your perspective in concert when you're performing on any given particular song, what are you listening to the most around you?
You have to listen to everything. You have to feel everything. You're not concentrating, zoom in on the drums. You don't zoom in and concentrate on the vocals. You kind of give them all equal balance and you roughly feel and you hear yourself. You can't just listen to yourself, either. You've gotta hear everything. That's why you play in a band. You play as a band. You interact with each other. You kind of flow against each other. One thing changes another. You listen to everything.

What are your favorite songs on Ultra Beatdown and why?
I have to go back to my same answer, earlier. I think every song is as good as each other, because we work on them in equal amounts. When something isn't as good, we work on it harder to make that better or as good as the other songs. So, even the position for the last song, which we usually reserve for the crap song, the loser position, even that song is great. So, if your song on the album is good on the last one, it means something.

Yeah, certainly. Well, some people look at the vocation of being a musician in a positive light and some people look at it in the light of, "Well, entertainment is just not important. It's just a small portion of somebody's life if they have time for entertainment." How did your views on vocation of musician and artist change over time and what sort of resistance or challenges have you faced with thinking like that?
Well, if you're only working all the time, then life would be pretty boring and you can't really improve your productivity, so everyone's brain needs some sort of downtime to shut down and that's what we provide. We actually help things progress better by making people take one step back and two steps forward. You know, resetting their brain. Music can be inspirational in people's life to make it better as well, at the same time. Some people view music or sports or martial arts in ways that can help them in other parts of life. So, I think we're definitely more than just a bunch of long-haired people playing some notes and jumping around.

What about strings and picks?
Strings are the D'Addario strings, different gauge for different guitars, depending on studio or recording situation. Picks are Dunlop picks, 0.8.

Anything else you'd like to add?
I dunno. I guess we're on tour at the moment in the US, so hey, anyone that hasn't seen us or wants to see us, come check us out on this US tour. We're touring around the world, so if they're reading from anywhere else.

Thanks for your time.
Nice talking to you.

✖

"You hear this kind of religious stuff on tv all the time. It's not really up to us. It's not our job as musician or entertainer to be talking about this kind of thing. So, let's let the people that actually enjoy talking about this deal with it."

How do you learn how to do that?
That comes from experience. I've learned that. It takes many, many performances. You kind of slowly get it. And, at the same time, if you want to make a good presentation, you have to still be able to know what's going on and all that. Even when the lights are happening. You know, when lights are flashing and the sound sometimes is not that great, you need to find a way to know where you are. Everyone that's out there, they have to keep gigging and play loads of gigs.

What are the top five metal albums of all time?
I don't have any. To be honest, I'm not the person who has any favorites of anything. I think everything and lots of different things get different kinds of values. Nothing can do everything. That's what I say. You have to listen to different kinds of music, different kinds of bands. By having favorites, sometimes I think it kind of limits your vision.

If you were going to surprise our readers with a revelation of some of the stuff you listen to, what would be some of those artists or styles of music that would surprise us?
I think no one's really surprised anymore these days. I think with the internet breaking open and everything, you have the chance to listen to more kinds of music. Especially for me as a musician. To take it to a new level, I have to hear different kinds of music. So, I think people expect me to listen to more than just one style of music. If I only listened to metal, my playing definitely wouldn't be at the level I am now.

What are some pieces of gear or equipment that you couldn't do without?
I guess I need a guitar. I need an amp. It depends on what kind of level we're gonna play at. If we're gonna play a big concert, then we need everything. If I'm just gonna play the guitar and play something basic, I just need an amp and any old guitar.

What is your current guitar rig setup?
I have a signature Ibanez guitar. It's called an E-Gen, which I could talk for years on designs. It doesn't help these days, so if you want to play the same guitar as me, check it out. It's the same one that's in the shops now. I play a Rocktron Prophesy II pre-amp through a Mesa Boogie 2:Fifty separate power amp and a Peavey JSX cab, along with lots of different pedals, a whammy pedal, a Source Audio Hot Hand. JSX cabinet, a 4 x 12. I like to mix and match and choose the ones I like from different brands.

Anything else?
The list would be massive. That's the main ones. DiMarzio pickups on the guitars.

Encouraging and Equipping Persecuted Christians Behind the Bamboo Curtain and Beyond

FRONTLINE RESOURCES

Frontline Resources exists to encourage and equip the saints living under persecution behind what is traditionally known as the Bamboo Curtain - including Burma, China, Laos, and Vietnam. We also serve in other access-restricted nations of Asia (ARNA). Everything we do for persecuted and at-risk believers is at the request of pastors indigenous to the countries and numerous people groups they represent.

Frontline Resources provides Study Bibles, Mercy Funds for families of imprisoned or exiled pastors, safety and education for young people at high-risk of being lost to sex and drug trades, and emergency relief. We also provide training in Inductive Bible Study, Spiritual Warfare, Serving as a Sending Church, Biblical Leadership and more. Our training is very well received, carefully translated and fruitfully multiplied by indigenous pastors to believers numbering in the hundreds of thousands. More training is requested!

In access-restricted nations of Asia both access between indigenous Christians and access to them by foreign Christians is restricted or forbidden. It is comprised of Asian nations without authentic freedom of religion where restrictions inhibit, threaten, imprison or bring death to Christians. ARNA is home to most of the worlds persecuted Christians and most of the world's unreached peoples!

For more information about how to pray for and support persecuted Christians in ARNA:

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Album reviews

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A PLEA FOR PURGING

DEPRAVITY

There are very few times when I put in a record and have to stop doing what I'm doing and admire it. A Plea for Purging's sophomore release Depravity has done just that. The Nashville-based self-proclaimed "full-time touring band" has done quite a number on this release, moving from beautiful solos and incredible intricate guitar work (the main riff to "Malevolence" is ridiculous), to slowing the tempo down to something so slow and dissonant you have to wonder what was in the water they were drinking when they wrote it.

For example, within the first 30 seconds of "Motives," the song had taken so many different roads I had no clue where they were going (in a good way). The underlying guitar work was impeccable; subtle, but when you crank it up, made you know the record was something special. And in the final stretch of the song, they nix the breakdown and go with some incredible guitar to drive the melodic outro—only to drop one of the better breakdowns of the record for only about 10 seconds before ending the song.

Listening to *Depravity* is like watching an incredible movie, leaving the theater, sitting in your car and just wishing you could go back to that world. Knowing they play next to 300 shows a year, you can bet I'll be there to see them whenever they come by my town. Do yourself a favor and buy this record so you can be ready for it when they show up in your city. ~~[FACEDOWN] DAVID STAGG~~

Rating system

05 *CLASSIC*
04 *FABULOUS*
03 *SOLID*
02 *SUSPECT*
01 *AMISS*
***** *1/2*

THE ASCENDICATE

TO DIE AS KINGS

After changing their name and inking a contract with Solid State Records, The Ascendicate (or the band formerly known as the7method) officially returns to the Christian scene with a renewed vigor on their third album, *To Die As Kings*. Instead of savoring the nu-metal flavor that earned them so many accolades on their sophomore set, *Roses Like Razorblades* in 2005, the North Carolina quintet integrates hardcore and subtle punk rock elements into the blend. There is a massive array of ferocious growls that embody tracks like "Scottish" and "Pride Of Brutish," but it's great, because the words are actually understandable and the intense vocals compliment the heavy instrumentation, which usually happens during the verses. By the time the hook comes in anyway, The Ascendicate transforms into a suave, melodic, harmonizing machine. While the hardcore influence is apparent, it dwindles at times and is replaced by a melodic tone, thus allowing "You And Me" and "One Day Without You" to further separate the quintet from other musically-barbaric bands within the genre. The Ascendicate has altered their style and they may appear a bit sloppy, but these kings are proving they have the wisdom to change with the times and stay creative in a scene full of copycats. ~~[SOLID STATE] BEAR FRAZER~~

PARAMORE

THE FINAL RIOT!

The Final Riot! proves that Paramore is more than just a pretty face and voice. The band is a tight force, with guitarists Josh Farro and Taylor York, bassist Jeremy Davis and drummer Zac Farro forming a solid foundation for each of the songs here. Hayley Williams shows that she is a good front person, with lots of interaction between her and the audience, coaxing them to sing along and make noise at just the right times. While these factors must've made for a great live show, they don't necessarily make for a great live album. It was recorded well, but perhaps could have benefited from some of the "cheating" that the great live albums of old have done (can you say, "overdubs in the studio?"). Many of the moments that audience members who were there remember about the show, like when they sang along to counter-verses or choruses, weaken this listening experience. Even when the audience joins in loudly, which is few and far between, Hayley Williams does a better job with the vocals than the folks at Chicago's Congress Theatre did. The best songs on *Final Riot* turn out to be the ballads, since we hear all the vocals clearly and the mic isn't shared with the crowd. The best part about this package, of course, is the DVD disc, which mixes the *40 Days With Paramore* tour documentary with a well-lit, nicely-shot visual concert performance. While the editing choice of mixing the two was interesting, it's a questionable call, because some of the material is anti-climactic, like the band discussing at length the challenge of how to open the show, which comes after we've already seen the solo-followed-by-dueling guitar intro. Oh well, as a fan of Paramore, there's no way I wasn't going to pick this album up and, in spite of its flaws, I'm very glad I did. And, after all, one of the viewing options is concert-only, so you can avoid the interruptions. ~~[FUELED BY RAMEN] DOUG VAN PELT~~

THE REKONING

THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED

On their debut album *The Road Less Traveled*, desert greasers The Rekoning pump out punk riffs backed by traditional tough bravado – but don't let them fool you, their music is all about fun. Call and response choruses, gang vocals, choppy tracks and a rowdy pace ensures the trio's intentions to keep it pure to the roots of street punk that would make Rancid's Tim Armstrong proud. The intro and song "Paved In Gold" recruits the use of an accordion which (very) briefly hints the band towards the likes of the Celtic pride acts Street Dogs and Flogging Molly. But regardless of how the songs start, they all end the same way: drenched with vibrant sweat. ~~[STRIKE FIRST] DAN FRAZIER~~

SHINY TOY GUNS

SEASON OF POISON

Very little on *Season of Poison*, the newest release from California dance/punk/post rock act Shiny Toy Guns, comes across as subtle. This is not a bad thing. You have to appreciate a band who can throw everything in their arsenal into just about every song and it not come out sounding like a big fat mess. The songs, whether they are dipping into the realm of dance music or some future rock (or both at the same time), are well constructed, never outstaying their welcome (even on the 8-minute-plus "Poison") or seeming too obtuse. The melodies are catchy, and even when the songs re-interpret 80s New Wave ballad conventions they are rarely so sugary (in the rote pop sense) that you feel the need to skip ahead to the next track. Guitarist and vocalist Chad Petree, along with co-lead vocalist Sisely Treasure, both prove to be plenty capable at walking the line between lush and accessible and full of vitriol the next. That, combined with the washes of synthesizers and the forward thinking programming (which thankfully never seems to get in the way) make for an exciting package. The only downside is that despite how forward thinking the music is, it still feels like they could have pushed it further. This is, of course, being really nit-picky. The bottom line is that *Season of Poison* is a good record that is both interesting and fun to listen to. Who could fault it for that? ~~[UNIVERSAL MOTOWN] MIKE HOGAN~~

COMEBACK KID

THROUGH THE NOISE

Knowing where Comeback Kid's come from, listening to *Through the Noise* takes me back a little bit. Formed from the ashes of Figure Four, their gut-punching, old-school hard-core (the kind that's closer to punk than metal) is a throwback to the start of everything that the metal-core movement now embraces. It's like getting a history lesson. Unfortunately, when I look forward to a live release, I'm looking for something I couldn't originally get from the record and *Through the Noise* doesn't cut it for me. Don't get me wrong: Listening to songs like "Die Tonight" – originally on their debut release *Turn It Around* – made me a little nostalgic. I respect what the band's done for their music genre, but when I listen to this record, it seems more like the band just wanted to put something out. ~~[VICTORY] DAVID STAGG~~

KEKAL

AUDIBLE MINORITY

Kekal continues their arc of morphing from grinding death metal to a something so altogether different that it straddles multiple genres in search of its own. The Indonesian-Canadian trio's *The Habit of Fire* solidified an eclectic approach to prog metalurgy. On *Audible Minority*, however, the band seamlessly welds industrial electronics, more jazz than ever, what sounds like turntablism, blues and classical compositional conceits into an Ecclesiastical treatise on the futility of life outside Christ and the blessed discipline of life within Him. Per their previous catalog, however, they're more lyrically oblique than outright biblical didacticism. Such an approach not only exercises their poetic license, but perhaps gives them some protection in their not very Christian-friendly lands of residence. Were Tool not so emotionally bleak and knew English as a second language, they might approach Kekal's gloriously harsh jumble. Even so, they follow their muse's lead down largely uncharted sonic terrain where they're among the audible you-know-what. ~~[NE PLUS ULTRA] JAMIE LEE RAKE~~

Ratings

	DV	Writer
A Plea For Purging *Depravity*	04	04*
The Ascendicate *To Die As Kings*	03*	03*
Paramore *The Final Riot!*	03	
The Rekoning *The Road Less Traveled*	03*	03*
Shiny Toy Guns *Season Of Poison*	03	04
Comeback Kid *Through The Noise*	03	02*
Kekal *Audible Minority*	04	04
A Hope For Home *The Everlasting Man*	04	03*
The Red Jumpsuit Apparatus *Lonely Road*	04	02*
Bosque Brown *Baby*	03*	02
Tyrone Wells *Remain*	03*	03
Five Foot Five *Just For Living*	02	03
Revive *Chorus Of The Saints*	03	02
Van Morrison *Astral Weeks: Live at the Hollywood Bowl*	03*	05
X-Sinner *World Covered In Blood*	03	03

A HOPE FOR HOME

THE EVERLASTING MAN

A Hope For Home competes with the freak folk ensemble Anathallo for overtly layered and consequentially dense song titles on their second album, *The Everlasting Man* (a concept of failure and redemption based off of a G. K. Chesterton novel of the same name). But this should be taken as a promise to produce soluble music of substance. The Portland based sextet clearly takes inspiration from the older Northwest veteran act Emery by utilizing a melodic singer countered by a raw screamer and achieving the uncanny ability to smoothly transit from screamo intensity to tranquil refrains. The result is strikingly beautiful. ~~[STRIKE FIRST] DAN FRAZIER~~

THE RED JUMPSUIT APPARATUS

LONELY ROAD

Lonely Road, the new L.P. from Florida natives the Red Jumpsuit Apparatus, is a little tough to wrap your head around. At times it has the sound and feel of a Southern roots rock band that spent a vacation on the Sunset Strip and stayed a day too long. Vocal harmonies are thick and high, the guitar riffage is chicken fried, but the shredding and engineered grit wouldn't be out of place in the Roxy circa '89. "Pull Me Back" and album opener "You Better Pray" are perfect examples, while the nearly unlistenable power ballad "Believe" is an 80's era head scratcher that makes no sense coming out of a band this young. At other times, however, the band gives you what amounts to MySpace gold. Modern sounding pop punk influenced rock with teeth enough to keep your interest, just not sharp enough to scare anyone off. These guys know their way around an arena-sized hook, and it's in these moments that they really shine. Also notable is that they keep their lyrics on the positive side, and God bless 'em for it. It's so easy for bands of their genre to use angst and despair as a crutch (or a marketing device), so kudos to TRJA for offering an alternative. Overall, points go to the band for the uplifting teen anthems, but are taken away for too many songs that just make you want to hit the skip button. ~~[VIRGIN] MIKE HOGAN~~

BOSQUE BROWN

BABY

Bosque Brown, the 'group' name for singer/songwriter Mara Lee Miller, has created a sparse Americana album with *Baby*. Miller points to Damien Jurado and David Bazan as influences/inspirations, but her songs aren't nearly as dark as writings from those two Seattle mope-rs. Even so, the landscape of these 13 songs is about as desolate and flat as the Texas plains. And while Miller keeps instrumentation to a minimum, her slightly jazzy voice adds just enough spice to keep the listener tuned in. But a fine voice is not quite enough to prevent attention span from diminishing during the unaccompanied "On and Off (Part 1)," which is just a little too aurally dry. So, unless you have the patience of Job, you'll need a strong shot of caffeine to make it all the way through this challenging CD. ~~[BURNT TOAST VINYL] DAN MACINTOSH~~

TYRONE WELLS

REMAIN

Tyrone Wells certainly owns one of the most powerful voices in popular music. From his earliest days with the ahead-of-their-time rock outfit Skypark, through five years as an independent solo artist and his major label solo debut two years ago, it's the soulful, evocative baritone that sets Wells apart. On his latest, *Remain*, he aims straight for the heart with more enthusiastically pop oriented fare than ever before. Where Wells' solo debut was all about soul and groove, *Remain* establishes itself squarely in the adult contemporary pop realm. With around half of the record created in the U.K. with producers and co-writers associated with acts like Snow Patrol, Jason Mraz, KT Tunstall and James Morrison, and the other half a result of collaborations with Tim Myers of One Republic and David Hodges (Evanescence) in the US, the set has a made-for-radio feel for it that will likely thrill fans of James Blunt, Bebo Norman, David Gray and occasionally Coldplay. Quite a bit of the muscle and guts Wells has become known for are either absent or significantly underplayed, however. Acoustic guitars and various piano and organ styles create the dominant backdrop to Wells' voice and these immediately catchy ditties. The lyrics weave a blanket of encouragement, with frequent and subtle jumps from temporal to eternal themes. While the references all ring true to human relationships, the thoughts are never more than a slight reinterpretation away from flat out Gospel music. The opening mid-tempo anthem "I Will Remain" sets the pace as a pop-epic anthem that could be sung by a lover, a close friend or by God himself. This unabashed encouragement is delivered with a passionately spiritual perspective throughout the disc, hitting an especially worshipful tone mid-way through on a song called "All Broken Hearts" that could easily be used as a modern worship tune. No doubt some existing Tyrone Wells or Skypark fans will find the new material lacking in edge. It's a far cry from his earlier work and rocks very little. It holds up well, however, when compared to any of the recent adult pop scene. Considering the frequency with which his songs find their way onto television shows like *One Tree Hill* and *Ghost Whisperer*, this set seems perfectly constructed for the AC audience. ~~[UNIVERSAL REPUBLIC] JOHN J. THOMPSON~~

FIVE FOOT FIVE

JUST FOR LIVING

Five Foot Five is a young Texas trio that hits with pop punk punches on their album, *Just For Living*. The tracks carry an alacrity that summons nostalgia yearn for late 90s bands such as A New Found Glory and Blink-182. Bassist Steve Maldonado's vocal manner only reinforces this hint. The band dabbles in a cautioned variation with acoustic ballads "The First End Is The Worst End" and "Princess Charming," but ultimately comes off as weak efforts of The Plain White T's "Hey There Delilah." Luckily, solid upbeat zeal found on songs such as "Memo" and "Polotical Me" carries the album to a respectable appeal. And in regards to the cameo from the hip-hop group G'd Up on the final track, "Pepe Le Pue," even the new Five Foot Five should have known better. C'mon! ~~[BLUE DUCK] DAN FRAZIER~~

REVIVE

CHORUS OF THE SAINTS

Billboard called them one of the "best bets of 2009," so it comes as no surprise that Revive's *Chorus of the Saints* plants itself square in overly familiar Christian rock radio terrain. The title track, "You're All I Need," and "You Know" are indiscernible from similar catchy or inspiring tracks, especially the latter which features Third Day's Mac Powell – an instant nudge in case the band's formula doesn't work out on its own. ~~[CONSUMING FIRE] MATT CONNER~~

VAN MORRISON

ASTRAL WEEKS: LIVE AT THE HOLLYWOOD BOWL

You've likely read about and, perhaps, even attended such a concert. Veteran acts are now touring behind, or at least doing as one-off shows to perform, classic albums of theirs in their entirety. Van Morrison's meditative and poetic potpourri of U.S. soul and jazz comingled with classical and folk influences hit one of at least a few peaks with 1968's *Astral Weeks*. Forty years later, with his Christianity now more a publicly discussed facet of his artistry, a live recording revisiting that gem shows Van the Man still a commanding figure in his singularity. Here Morrison's songs of transcendence, despair and redemption breathe freer with extended instrumental and vocal excursions, the latter performed by a voice that has aged in such rough/tender glory. Not hearing the original studio album shouldn't hamper an appreciation of this masterful song cycle. Turntable owners will want the double-LP instead of (or as well as) the CD for its inclusion of other non-*Astral* nuggets, including a take on the garage punk stomper he recorded pre-solo with Them, "Gloria." ~~[LISTEN TO THE LION/EMI] JAMIE LEE RAKE~~

X-SINNER

WORLD COVERED IN BLOOD

I'm a Baptist who has sung about power in the blood his whole life. But nothing from Sundays past could prepare me for X-Sinner's new one, *World Covered in Blood*, which features a CD cover of the Statue of Liberty up to her skirt in the red stuff. "Though we're guilty – we can't escape/Forgiving power in this lake," Rex Scott sings, like a rock & roll preacher. This late '80s band, which also features Greg Bishop on guitar and Rob Kniep on bass, has now released its fourth CD this millennium and appears to be more active than ever. Scott still growls like an animal on the prowl and Bishop just keeps his endless supply of riffs coming. And all this blood is also living proof that X-Sinner's heart still beats strong. ~~[IMAGE] DAN MACINTOSH~~

CHRISTAFARI & FRIENDS

REGGAE REDEMPTION SONGS II

Not for no reason has Christafari become the world's most renowned gospel reggae act. They've learned to balance rootsy authenticity with hooks and innovation to lure new listeners into their fold. As evidenced by the second volume of this compilation series, C-fari leader Mark Mohr has impeccable taste in his brethren and sistren in likeminded syncopation. Naturally enough, the host band and their featured female, Avion Blackman, get ample shine, and deservedly so. Former C-fari guitarist Hugh DeFrance and Roge' Abergal sound vocally, ah, like they have more melanin than they do. Hear dancehall duo Monty G. and Mr. Lynx flow over an organic groove supplemented by J. Vernon McGee samples(!). Among the set's other merits, Sherwin Gardner adapts a praise & worship chorus oldie to luminescent effect. Imisi do their tight harmony thang, Solomon Jabby keeps things dubby, and Jennifer Howland comes on as J.C. Lodge's churchgoing sister. Liner notes extensively debunk Rastafarianism's claim of late Ethiopian king Hailie Selassie's deity, so share it with your dreadlocked, ganja-puffing friends for that, too. The album's graphic art direction, though? Ehhh... ~~[LION OF ZION] JAMIE LEE RAKE~~

SYMPATHY

ANAGOGIC TYRANNY

I find that there is a beauty in storms, as the power is unleashed we can see a small portion of the power of God and the limited power of mankind. Sympathy plays aggressively and batters the listener to submission. Much like a storm, there is beauty found amidst the devastation. Musically this is technical brutal death with a clear classical influence. There is also some heady subject matter to wade thru lyrically here. Though this is the third full-length album from Sympathy, it's really the first for them as a full band. In addition to Derek's vocals and brutal style of music, this album features the amazing stylings of songwriter and guitarist Jeff Lewis (Mortification) and the graceful violence of Jim Austin (Into Eternity) on drums. This album is highly recommended, I would say that it is an album that you simply must have. ~~[BOMBWORKS] MICHAEL LARSON~~

TY TABOR

BALANCE

Many guitarist solo projects scream out the obvious warning: 'Selfish indulgence – beware!' Rightfully so, too, because many lead guitarists are also frustrated front men. Ty Tabor of King's X, however, gets plenty of space to express himself via his day job band. Yet with this current project, even diehard King's X fans ought to be glad Tabor was given complete creative control as *Balance* overflows with plenty of fine songs spiced with the axe man's always exemplary guitar playing. It's tough to pick just one favorite, but the blues of "Don't Bring Me Down" hovers near the top of the list. It includes the pinpointed lyric, "Don't stand in line just to hurt me." Tabor is always so darn melodic it would be false advertising to call this music hard rock. Perhaps, hardcore power-pop is a more apt description. But whatever you want to label it, by all means do not pass up *Balance*. ~~[MOLKEN MUSIC] DAN MACINTOSH~~

THE GALLERY

IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN

Instead of almost breaking up due to the loss of their lead singer, The Gallery asked their guitarist Brendan Cooney to fulfill the vacant duty and lead them to create their debut album, *If You Know What I Mean*. The songs are heartfelt testimonies from a group of friends emitting everything they have for one last shot, and the result is a solid effort of catchy rock songs soaked in ethereal pop. By evoking the melodic upbeat spirits of Melee and occasionally the raw acoustics of The Snake The Cross The Crown (such as on the sincere "The Lonely Disease"), The Gallery showcases their diverse talents and inadvertently blusters their justified decision to continue. ~~[BLUE DUCK] DAN FRAZIER~~

BUDDY & JULIE MILLER

WRITTEN IN CHALK

After eight years, the dynamic, dusty country music of Buddy and Julie Miller finally result in another collaboration, entitled *Written in Chalk*. The Americana legends have released 11 solo albums between them and certainly they've contributed plenty to each other's work. But there's an energy and emotion present on *Chalk*, a resilience that slowly shows through on these weathered tracks, which make this a rare effort. Of course, part of that might be a result of the guest list. Patty Griffin, Regina McCrary, Robert Plant and Emmylou Harris all make their presence felt, with Griffin's tracks specifically hitting home. "Don't Say Goodbye" moves the listener as much as any track you'll find this year. Same goes for "Every Time We Say Goodbye." Julie's vocals, in particular, wrestle with the human condition in a way few artists can. It's a long-awaited effort from two living legends in love with life and each other. ~~[NEW WEST] MATT CONNER~~

YOURS FOR MINE

DEAR CHILDREN

Harrisonburg, Virginia's Yours For Mine have recorded one fine debut, which underlines the fact that, although they've only been together since 2006, they're seasoned musicians with years of experience together. Thus, the tightness and apparent willingness to explore vast territory with skill. One moment they're picking those discordant guitar blips and screaming bloody murder a la NJ at the beginning of "Absence In Elegance" and the next they're hitting a bridge near song's end, where they jump into a jazzy lo-fi jam complete with horns. "My Tomorrow" and "Call Me Distant" both show off some cool percussive skills … with those dancing drumsticks. To achieve the sonic quality they did, they tapped their well-known friend, Caleb Keiter (Death Cab For Cutie, Queens Of The Stone Age) to help them produce and engineer. Kim Rosen (Radio 4, Franz Ferdinand, Dashboard Confessional, Jeremy Enigk) did the mastering. Overall, *Dear Children* is a very diverse album of creativity that stretches itself beyond the norm of song dynamics (intensity and chill), teetering on exploding, but all without breaking. ~~[BLOOD & INK] DOUG VAN PELT~~

T BONE BURNETT

TOOTH OF CRIME

One of the mysteries of the modern musical world must be how a producer renowned for bringing other artists and soundtracks to gold and platinum sales certifications can't sell jack diddley squat of his own albums for the past 20 years. In the case of producer T Bone Burnett, it can't quite be about the music. His fourth longplayer in the past couple decades (but second in two years), *Tooth Of Crime*, is rich and varied, at some of its best times sounding like acoustic trip-hop as re-imagined by a New Orleans marching band. And there's plenty else going on sonically as well. Heck, the track where he has ex-wife Sam Phillips singing could be a leftfield adult top 40 contender. So, what's fouling up this winning mix? It's Burnett's increasingly sour 'tude and wordplay that borders on the obtuse gobbledygook of the politicians, celebrities, et al he criticizes. That this album was recorded in conjunction with a play (which Burnett didn't write) doesn't much excuse his disposition, as he was headed there on his last solo outing. Burnett's long been a musical/lyrical hero of mine, but could someone make him maybe crack a smile before he commits himself to the recording booth again? And maybe a new haircut to boot. ~~[NONESUCH] JAMIE LEE RAKE~~

Ratings

	DV	Writer
Christafari & Friends *Reggae Redemption Songs II*	03*	04
Sympathy *Anagogic Tyranny*	03*	05
Ty Tabor *Balance*	03*	03*
The Gallery *If You Know What I Mean*	03*	04
Buddy & Julie Miller *Written In Chalk*	04	04
Yours For Mine *Dear Children*	03	
T Bone Burnett *Tooth Of Crime*	03	03
Various Artists *Hello Vinyl*	04	03*
Deathstar *The Triumph*	03*	04
Gary Murray & LN *Downstream Angels*	03*	04
Fiction Family *S/T*	03*	04
Flaskavsae/Light Shall Prevail *Split CD*	02*	04
My Silent Wake *A Garland Of Tears*	02*	04
Elotheos *Watchmen Don't Sleep, So Why Should We?*	03	02*
King's X *Gretchen Goes To London (DVD)*	02	02*

VARIOUS ARTISTS
HELLO VINYL

Musical curios that take pride in their antiquity are always welcome in my world. *Hello Vinyl* from Velvet Blue Records is no exception, as it gathers together the best of the record label's rare vinyl tracks onto a singular double-disc collection. Music fans both new and old can now hear these great songs in one fell swoop, in their un-remastered glory. Some rock snobs might balk at having their precious out-of-print 7" records made available for the masses, but I would rather everyone have access to old-school Pony Express, Jetenderpaul, Fine China, and Richard Swift than not. When you factor in the opportunity to hear early versions of songs by Joy Electric (as Rainbow Rider), Bon Voyage, and Fold Zandura before they were updated for future digital release, you simply can't lose with *Hello Vinyl*.
[VELVET BLUE] ADAM P. NEWTON

DEATHSTAR
THE TRIUMPH

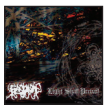
Deathstar's debut album, *The Triumph*, was originally released in 2004 by Life Sentence Records. Due to the album's popularity, it has been out of print for a few years and the band's current label, Facedown Records, decided to help the fans out by re-releasing it – topped off with a re-mixed and re-mastered sound. The album also features new artwork by label staple Dave Quiggle and features the opposite perspective of the artwork used for Deathstar's second album: *We Are The Threat*. (Instead of seeing the back of a gang of shady bravados as on *Threat*, we see their dark faceless facades for *Triumph*). Deathstar's instant success and loyal fan following can be attributed to the pure harsh hardcore the seven-piece band so accurately produced on their debut. The hardcore genre is plagued with splintering influencing factions of metal, dirty rock, and screamo that threaten to dilute the scene. Deathstar viciously crushed any skepticism that intense heavy-hitting songs pumped by messages of straight-edge unity and Christian values are dead. It is probably not a coincidence that the seventh track, "Suffocate Faster," shares the same name as another hardcore purist band with whom Deathstar later went on to split an EP with. An old-school hardcore void and hunger may have once existed, but the resurgence and satisfaction started here. ~~[FACEDOWN] DAN FRAZIER~~

GARY MURRAY & LN
DOWNSTREAM ANGELS

The concept of the movie soundtracks is quite a thorny one in the mind of this reviewer. For every *Saturday Night Fever*, with its now-iconic original compositions, there's a *Garden State* that takes a hip pop song out of its original context to place it alongside some extremely poignant cinematic event to create a new memory and context for said song. If a filmmaker wants a certain band to contribute music to his/her project, that band should be employed to write fresh material for the movie. There's a reason that the music for *About A Boy*, *There Will Be Blood*, and *The Virgin Suicides* is so exceptional: talents like Badly Drawn Boy, Jonny Greenwood, and Air (respectively) were brought on to create music specifically designed for said films. Thus, it is this reviewer's contention that the folks responsible for *The Road* (the upcoming movie based on a recent Cormac McCarthy novel) should take it upon themselves to use *Downstream Angels*, the recent album from Gary Murray & LN, for the film's soundtrack. This eight-song record, the first collaboration between Gary and his old band in a couple of years, swirls with an aching, haunting, mysterious beauty that would artfully complement the book's post-apocalyptic landscape. Musically, the album comes across as a combination of ambient instrumentation in the vein of Low, Tom Waits-styled bourbon-soaked wordplay, and Gary's own inimitable hushed vocal delivery. This is not an album for blue skies, green grass, and big smiles; *Downstream Angels* is best appreciated with friends huddled around a fireplace for warmth on a cold night needing fodder for conversation. Led by the key tracks "Niagra" and "The Lost Art of Mending Wings," Gary Murray & LN have returned with a stellar, but all too brief, album. ~~[VELVET BLUE] ADAM P. NEWTON~~

FICTION FAMILY
S/T

Strange little album, this, but it's a strangeness that can grow on you. Intermittent collaborations among Switchfoot's Jon Foreman and Nickel Creek's Sean Watkins have finally paid off in a full-fledged side project for both. And instead of a straight cross-pollination of the former's earnestly epic and positive alt' rock and the latter's exploratory post-bluegrass rootsiness, it's all over the place and quietly stranger than the sum of the participants' parts. At times recalling the blurry angst of Counting Crows demo's, elsewhere like MuteMath going acoustically shambolic, and elsewhere proffering Sam Phillips-esque chamber pop and uncomplicated folk pop, there's a lot going on here. If it's a tad unsorted, it's also mostly compelling. The lyrical element of the Fiction'ers' Christianity comes in lyrics just oblique enough to not put off non-churched fans of both constituent acts. But there's about as many guy-gal love songs, or variations thereof, as more spiritual/philosophical ruminations. If the point is for Foreman and Watkins to return to the bands from which they came after this for at least a while, both portend to bring some refreshing askew ideas to their respective groups.
~~[ATO] JAMIE LEE RAKE~~



FLASKAVSAE / LIGHT SHALL PREVAIL
SPLIT CD

Everything about this split makes sense to me, the bands, the production, the artwork and the layout. Musically this is quite atmospheric with some haunting and beautiful hooks and, unlike most un-black, the production doesn't hinder the listening process. Like a cold arctic wind over the soul, this disc creates a world blistering and bleak. Madness infuriating as the depths of the human condition separate us from the divine, the passion, the longing, and the reality found within this disc is inspiring. Wee children and those with pacemakers steer clear; this is a harsh reality, both dark but lovely.
~~[EEE RECORDINGS] MICHAEL LARSON~~

MY SILENT WAKE
A GARLAND OF TEARS

"I hope that our songs can be of comfort to those who are at their very lowest… many of them portray hope as well as sorrow, anger and questioning." Reading these words on the CD insert, for those who are unfamiliar with the band and even for those who are, will help one understand and appreciate the inspiration for *A Garland of Tears*. Doom metal with a significant folk influence and lyrics that are even heavier than the music, this is not an album that can be listened to carelessly. With Ian Arkley's (Seventh Angel, Ashen Mortality) signature sound and the perfect amount of melody and hope instilled in the songs to carry the listener through, *A Garland of Tears* is My Silent Wake's best album to date. ~~[BOMBWORKS] CHRIS BECK~~

ELOTHEOS
WATCHMEN DON'T SLEEP, SO WHY SHOULD WE?

Connecticut based Elotheos turns every one of their songs into a complexly layered screamo epic. By incorporating soaring guitar shreds, uplifting choruses, and peppered metal turmoil, each track could be divided into three songs apiece – a feat rarely perfected. Lead vocals are sporadically harmonized with ambiguously sourced shrieks, shrills and overbearing gang vocals, while breakdowns occasionally kill the crescendo with a discerning cacophony of clatter. This makes their debut album, *Watchmen Don't Sleep, So Why Should We?* as if Emery and the defunct Beloved decided to mix their demos together. But that should be read with optimistic potential. ~~[BLUE DUCK] DAN FRAZIER~~

KING'S X
GRETCHEN GOES TO LONDON (DVD)

This King's X DVD documents a time when the Houston band was still considered a Christian band. Or a trio of Christians, if nothing else. If you expect the perfect King's X home theater experience from this concert disc, these fuzzy visuals can never scratch that itch. Drawing from the band's first two releases (*Out of the Silent Planet* and *Gretchen Goes to Nebraska*, respectively), King's X is captured as an exciting new (at the time) band. The group may not be so new any longer, but the excitement of seeing this act live remains. Take a look at this DVD and get a grasp on how it all started. ~~[MOLKEN MUSIC] DAN MACINTOSH~~

CHRIS LIZOTTE
SIGNAL HILL REVIVAL

Chris Lizotte is the antidote for formulaic worship music. *Signal Hill Revival* is a loose and soulful outpouring of praise, much like tent meetings of old. Marc Ford produced this 12-track project and also adds much of its expressive guitar coloring. Lizotte is also joined by old friend (and one who is equally soulful) Crystal Lewis on "Brighter Day." Lizotte also wrote most of these songs, but he has the good sense to incorporate a bit of of Bob Dylan's "I Shall Be Released" into a two-song medley with "Glory to the King." There's a familiar song we all sing about getting back to the heart of worship, but Signal Hill Revival demonstrates exactly how to get praise music rightfully centered again. ~~[VERITAL] DAN MACINTOSH~~

PHILMONT
ATTENTION!

A huge jump ahead of *Oh Snap*, released just a short time ago, Philmont has progressed in a few months the way most bands progress in a few years. With a couple of the best repeats from their first go around, this full-length compilation manages to pull itself out of the initial "church rock" vibe that shadowed its predecessor. "To Say They Hit It Off…" flirts with screaming, and "Hello Jack" opens with a very punk/rock kickoff, while songs like "Letter to the Editor" hold precedence with the acoustics that shouted "Kudos!" to the EP. The growth acclimates into a lyrically pensive depth that brings self-examination and honesty to the surface. "There's nothing to salvage, but you see something left in me." ("Letters to the Editor") It's something that I can picture a million ponytails bobbing up and down to, but I think there's more than just "something left." ~~[FOREFRONT] LEVI MACALLISTER~~

WITH FAITH OR FLAMES
A CONQUEST TRIUMPHANT

When these kind of harmonizing guitars first came upon the scene, it was an unsuspecting world about to be drenched with the New Wave of British Heavy Metal (NWOBHM for short), but these running guitars sound so well alongside the screaming and howling and growling vocals of Ian Sharp (especially since operatic-wailing-like-a-banshee is out of vogue these days). Images of early Showdown easily come to mind. Eric Weatherford and Trevor DeGaine flat out shred, and bassist Eric Collins is no slouch, either. You can hear him galloping along atop the double bass drumming of Andrew Core (who, by the way, turned down an offer to drum in Black Dahlia Murder ... his audition videos can be seen on youtube), who meld their beats together like a titanium machine. This Chattanooga, TN quintet would be at home with marauding Vikings in Norway, or a hardcore pit, as well as alongside American metal giants As I Lay Dying. This sophomore follow-up to 2005's *Beneath The Heel of Oppression* should at least firmly plant them on the metal map. Lyrically, this 3/5's Christian members band compose confusing dialog that seems to wander between God above and demon spirits. When couching powerful music like this in a spiritual warfare motif, it's a shame you can't really tell what side they're on. ~~[STAND AND DELIVER] DOUG VAN PELT~~

RANDY STONEHILL
PARADISE SKY

David Di Sabatino has attempted to explain one of Christian music's greatest enigmas, Larry Norman, through his documentary *Fallen Angel*. With *Paradise Sky*, Randy Stonehill has re-recorded a few of his best earlier works to create the film's soundtrack. These range from the extremely old "Norman's Kitchen" – Stonehill's conversion story – to the relatively recent "Even the Best of Friends," which documents Randy's difficult relationship with Larry. It's nearly impossible to go wrong with a half-dozen tracks from *Welcome to Paradise*, the classic Stonehill album that came out on Norman's pioneering Solid Rock label. And while sparkling modern production is one obvious difference between these new takes and their originals, Jade Ramsey's spoken word interlude during the antichrist/satanic figure song, "Counterfeit King," is a nice touch along with the track's dramatic string section. Those that may have missed these songs the first time around would do well to experience them now, better late than never. ~~[STONEHILLIAN MUSIC] DAN MACINTOSH~~

CORPUS CHRISTI
THE DARKER SHADES OF WHITE

When I first kicked off *The Darker Shades of White*, I had high hopes. There's nothing like an aural assault from the kick-off of a record. Corpus Christi brings it from the start, similar to Pantera's *The Great Southern Trendkill*. The record continues to impress (love the intro riff to "It's Always Darkest Before Dawn"), but as it progresses, CC starts to layer in actual singing. When it does, with the intricate guitar work behind the melodies, it reminds me a lot of Killswitch Engage. It's a great record for a young band, and I only look forward to catching them live. Great technical skill with solid melodies. (And by the way, Corpus Christi means "body of Christ" in Latin. It's not just a city in Texas.). ~~[VICTORY] DAVID STAGG~~

BELIEVER
GABRIEL

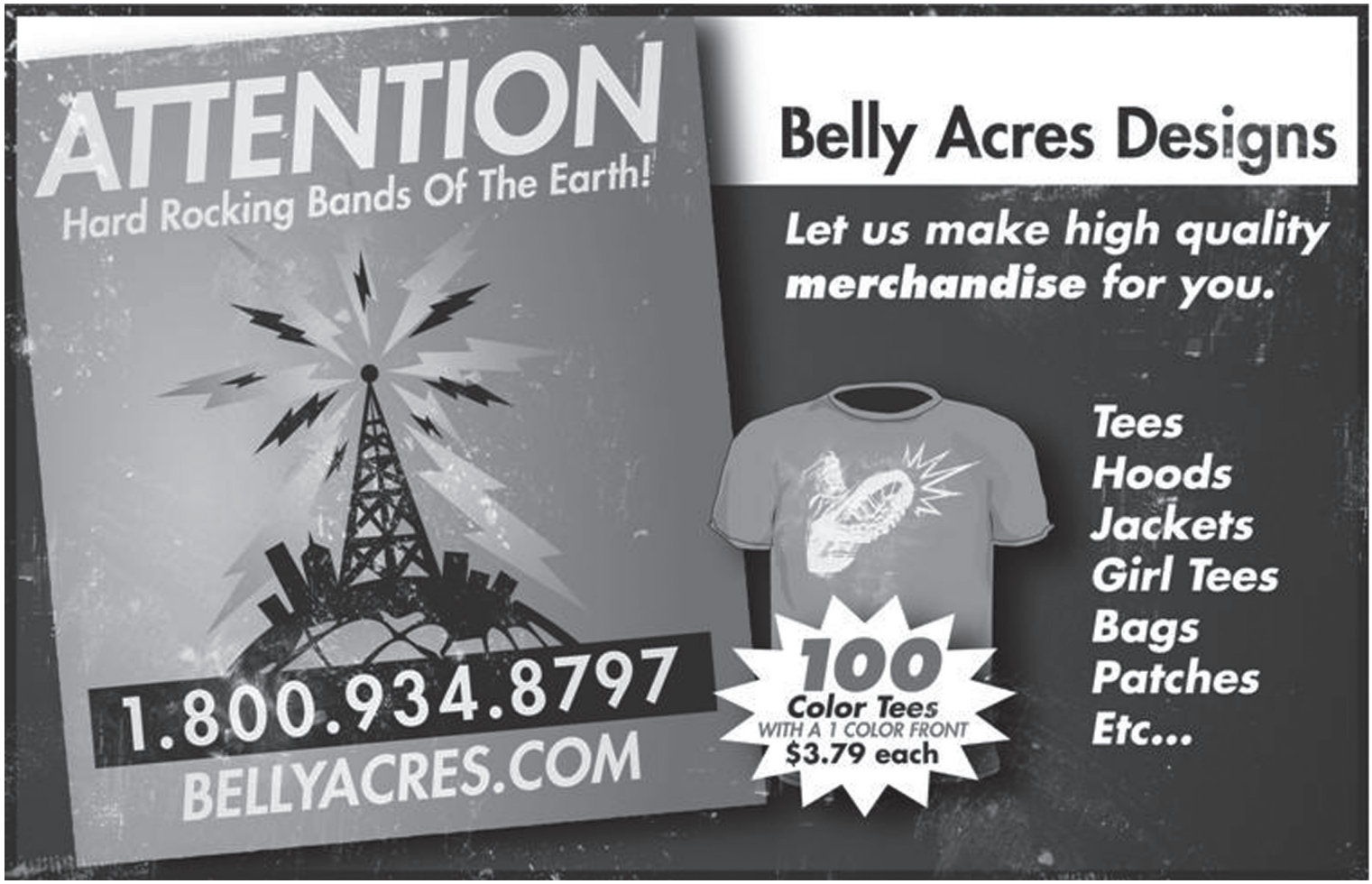
Fifteen years after the release of *Dimensions*, Believer has finally returned with a new album. Fifteen years is a long time. Long enough to forget just how brutal Believer's music was, how insane Joey Daub's drumming was and how the band composed riffs so technical that most other bands wouldn't have dreamed of playing them. And then you listen to *Gabriel* and it all comes back to you. Metal isn't supposed to sound this good. The typical Believer elements are present, including the seemingly random time changes and Kurt Bachman's screaming vocals, such that *Gabriel* could easily have been released years ago as the immediate follow-up to *Dimensions*. As with any Believer album, there are some changes – keyboard, sound and voice programming throughout that are slightly overused, leaving me wishing they would have let the music stand by itself. Still, this is unmistakably Believer, and unmistakably a great album. Welcome back. ~~[METAL BLADE] CHRIS BECK~~

UNDERNEATH THE GUN
FORFEIT MISFORTUNES

Hailing from the Inland Empire deserts of Southern California, Underneath The Gun guarantees shredding alacrity, guttural breakdowns, and screaming torments of crescendo relief – in every song. Vocalist Harrison Vickers must border on asphyxiating himself as he switches from scratching screams to deep roars as his bandmates attempt to follow the escalating scrambles and tumbles of furor. The result gives the songs a sense of struggle and redemption; yet after an entire album's worth, you wish the journey was either shorter or not as intense. ~~[FERRET] DAN FRAZIER~~

Ratings

	DV	Writer
ChrisLizotte *Signal Hill Revival*	04	03
Philmont *Attention!*	03	04
With Faith Or Flames *A Conquest Triumphant*	02*	
Randy Stonehill *Paradise Sky*	04	03*
Corpus Christi *The Darker Shades Of White*	04	03*
Believer *Gabriel*	04	03*
Underneath The Gun *Forfeit Misfortunes*	04	03



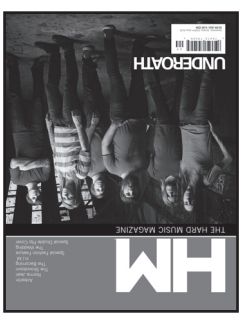
HM BACK ISSUES: READ 'EM WHILE YOU CAN

#114
20th Anniv Issue S.E.

Payable On Death
Disciple
MxPx
Every Time I Die Says
TFK
Robert Randolph
Damien Jurado
Headphones
History of C.Rock
History of C.Metal
History of HM mag

#134
Disciple & BTA

Haste The Day
Starflyer 59
Everclear Says
Trenches
Family Force 5
FF5 poster
Austrian Death Machine
Grave Robber
Cool Hand Luke
Jonezetta
Copeland



#133
Anberlin & Underoath

Special "flip" double cover
HIM Says
Brian "Head" W.
Norma Jean poster
The Showdown
Norma Jean
The Becoming
The Wedding
Krystal Meyers
Bon Voyage
Cstone & Warped

#135
Red

Demon Hunter
Denison Witmer
Crimson Moonlight
As I Lay Dying Poster
The Almost
ill nino Says
My Epic
Wrench In The Works
Anathallo
2008 Staff Picks
Confide

To order back issues, see special offers, and do domestic and foreign postage calculation, go to our webstore at hmmag.com

PARTIAL LIST OF AVAILABLE BACK ISSUES:

#088 Mar/Apr '01 **Zao**, Luti-Kriss, **The Brothers Martin** (yes!), The Alarm, FSF
#091 Sep/Oct '01 **P.O.D.**, **Dashboard Confessional**, DA, One 21, Embodyment
#098 Nov/Dec '02 **Blindside**, Dream Theater Says, **Embodyment**, Lost Dogs
#104 Nov/Dec '03 **The Ugly Truth Behind C. Rock**, J. Cash, BRMC, **Thursday Says**
#110 Nov/Dec '04 So&SoSays Special, In Flames, **Lamb of God**, Throwdown, **Slipknot**
#111 Jan/Feb '05 **Comeback Kid**, Showbread, Anberlin, **Taking Back Sunday Says**
#112 Mar/Apr '05 **Norma Jean**, Extol, Starflyer 59, **Eisley**, Far-Less, Scorpions Says
#115 Sep/Oct '05 **Blindside**, Mortal Treason, John Davis, **Project 86**, The Locust Says
#116 Nov/Dec '05 **No Innocent Victim**, Demon Hunter, **My Chemical Romance Says**
#117 Jan/Mar '06 **P.O.D.**, Zao, **Maylene**..., Underoath poster, **Sevendust** Says
#119 May/Jun '06 **Underoath**, Project 86, Danielson, **Bleeding Through Says**
#121 Sep/Oct '06 **Norma Jean**, Showbread, **mewithoutYou**, Buckcherry Says
#125 May/Jun '07 **The Chariot**, BTA, **Vlrgin Black**, Skinny Puppy Says, **Chevelle**
#126 Jul/Aug '07 **Project 86**, MxPx, **The Almost poster**, Nodes, **Seventh Star**
#127 Sep/Oct '07 As I Lay Dying, **Paramore**, ABR, As Cities Burn, **Still Remains**
#128 Nov/Dec '07 **Demon Hunter**, Emery, **TDWP**, Chris Cornell Says, Spoken
#129 Jan/Feb '08 **Thrice**, Pillar poster, **Korn Says**, Inked In Blood, **A Plea for Purging**
#130 Mar/Apr '08 **The Myriad**, Shiny Toy Guns Says, **Leeland**, Children 18:3
#131 May/Jun '08 **Showbread / P.O.D.** (flip cvr), Soul Embraced, **Larry Norman** trib.
#132 Jul/Aug '08 **War of Ages / Kutless** (flip), Means, **The Famine**, Stooges Says

Entertainment reviews
DVDS, BOOKS & GADGETS

01 FIREPROOF
SONY PICTURES HOME ENTERTAINMENT

I kept waiting for it to happen – you know, the cheesy moment in "the Christian film," where low-level talent gets your attention. Sometimes it's in the writing department, with stale, predictable lines of dialog; and other times it's just the acting performance that keeps you from believing the character in a certain role. Granted, there are a couple scenes in this movie that fall a little short, like one or two of the many male-bonding scenes in the firehouse between the support characters; and even the performance of the two main characters in the climactic scene at the end could have been shot a little better. However, overall *Fireproof* is a quality film here that never delivers the second-hand goods we were, unfortunately, expecting. Using fire-fighting as the backdrop, the struggle and challenge of nurturing (and sometimes saving) a marriage takes center stage here to good effect. Don't expect an Oscar-worthy performance; but, in a world where indie films are treated with open minds, this one is good. The accompanying *The Love Dare: Legacy Edition* book (which started out as a simple prop/plot device in the movie) that B&H Publishing has made available in a cross-promotion with the DVD release is a substantial way to dig deeper into the film's subject matter. More than a simple collectable item from the film, it's actually an honorable way for this movie to make a lasting impact upon our culture. Not bad for the little film company that's basically just the media outreach from Albany, GA's Sherwood Church. *Doug Van Pelt*

02 NICK & NORAH'S INFINITE PLAYLIST *SONY PICTURES*
An adorable romantic comedy bathed in today's culture (and tunes). Forlorn Nick's state is hilarious, forcing him to tell his gay friends: "You guys don't know what it's like to be straight – it's awful!" The vomit/toilet/gum/cellphone scene by drunk Caroline is memorable in its depth of grossness. Norah and Nick bond over rad indie rock. *DV*

03 THE ROCKER *FOX HOME VIDEO*
Sure, it's like Jack Black's *School Of Rock* character revisited, but it's a blast of comedy all dressed in the context of a young hip rock band, as well as the spector of an epic power metal band called Vesuvious, which is over-the-top. One scene features a funny gag: "Just look at him – Abercrombie is making *people*!" *DV*

04 HOUSE *CREATIVE TRUST MEDIA*
"God came into my house and I killed him…" Peretti and Dekker accomplished the impossible: a Christian film that gets past the "b-movie" stereotype. This story finds two couples fighting for life and sanity in the home of evil personified. Disturbing, eerie, and ultimately redemptive. *Levi Macallister*

05 A COLBERT CHRISTMAS *COMEDY CENTRAL*
As much as this funny guy pokes fun at believers, he shows respect towards a belief in Christ in this silly Christmas special, with guests like Elvis Costello, Willie Nelson, Toby Keith, John Legend, and Feist. The most offensive things on the entire DVD would, in fact, be the trailers before the DVD menu. Beware. *DV*

06 HORTON HEARS A WHO *FOX HOME VIDEO*
Call me forgetful, but I never knew this Dr. Seuss book held so many allegorical connections to the Gospel, like the existence of a "higher power" that might be invisible to those on the small planet. There's even a little dig at home schooling to boot! As always, Seuss is full of zany wit and the vocal performances rock. *DV*

07 THE CULT OF CARTMAN *COMEDY CENTRAL*
South Park isn't all-bad, but it won't appeal to conservative ears. If you look past language and innuendo, you can pull significant moral lessons from the sarcastic approach the writers take. But "if" is a very key word, and Cartman's unedited life lessons insist we tread lightly. *LM*

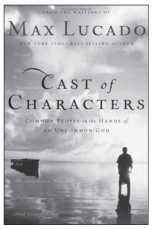
08 JOHNNY CASH: CHAPTER & VERSE *BIBLES ON DVD*
This DVD is much less the kind you'll pop in for friends for a good time; and instead use personally as a devotional listening/reading as the Man in Black reads the text displayed on the screen. The accompanying music CD is more lively, which includes several old Gospel music standards and Cash originals. [biblesondvd.com] *DV*

	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08
SPIRITUAL RELEVANCY (%)	100	30	10	100	90	100	20	100
OBSCENITIES		18	9				203	
SCENES OF GORE								
NUDITY / SEXUALITY		2					27	

I Hate New Music: The Classic Rock Manifesto

Dave Thompson – Backbeat/Hal Leonard

You don't maintain an argument for over 200 pages, however facetious, without making some valid points. Or at least you don't if you're prolific rock book author Dave Thompson, and you're discussing the one thing King Solomon and The Bare Naked Ladies can agree on: it's all been done before. So says Thompson regarding originality in rock music in *I Hate New Music*. Setting his classic rock parameters between 1968 and 1976 seems pretty apt as he unwinds his thesis. Even as he chides Nirvana for swiping Boston, hails the eight-track as the most ideal format for rock listening, he nails some points in music history that will ring especially with those of us who lived through them. Maybe the last few months of 1978 really did seal the rose of slick, bland corporate rock. And the respectability Live Aid gave rock could well could have doomed the music as a vehicle for anti-social rebellion. Thompson wrote his guidelines for keeping rock rocking with his tongue farthest in cheek, he admits that his list of 100 most classic songs will instigate debate, and the relevance of his screed may be a tangential matter at best for Christocentric rock. Still, hilarity and insight are married comfortably in Thompson's musings. *Jamie Lee Rake*



Cast Of Characters

Max Lucado – Thomas Nelson

I've got to be honest, the book's got that daily devotional feel to it that reminds you of those spiritual-high-weekends you took for the mid-high youth group trips. It's beautiful, but it's got a little cheese – like something you'd pick up off the "inspirational" shelves at Barnes & Noble. This is not a bad thing. Lucado reminds us that biblical characters are not saints or sinless. Through a series of short chapters, which retell the stories of people like Joseph, Mary and Martha, the two criminals at Jesus' side, Job, etc. (with hints of creative liberties), he invites readers to in-depth analysis of the principles each tale represents – in laymen's terms. The best part about books like this is the ability to draw applicable and relatable life lessons, direct your thoughts and motives on biblically foundational applications, and realize that if God consistently used society's "wretched" – he can use me, too. *Levi Macallister*

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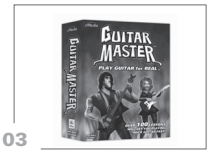

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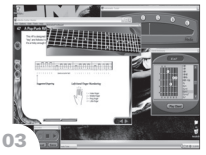
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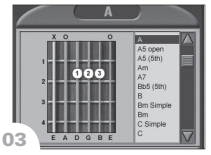

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Gadgets

Skull Candy, Coffin Case, eMedia, Griffin

Skull Candy's **Audio Pack** (01) is a backpack with waterproof speakers built into the shoulder straps, along with an iPod (or any mp3 player) controller on the lower right strap. Nice volume levels right by your ears. Lots of cool backpack compartments, including a full-size, padded one for a notebook ($129). For those that take their gaming seriously (or just want to psyche out the competition) Coffin Case makes a **Video Game Controller Bag** (02) in several rockin' designs with soft zippered inner lining ($39). With all the buzz on rock music gaming, eMedia has packaged its ***Guitar Master*** (03) instructional software (which is always thorough, intuitive, & effective) with a video game vibe, featuring many of the classic songs from the games in its wide collection of song lessons ($39). It's easy to set up and includes great tools, like a tuner, metronome, and recorder, so you can track your progression. Besides having a fair song list to choose from and learn, the best thing about it is the totally private and self-paced environment it puts you in. With advances in iPods now offering photos, videos and movies for the handheld device, (04) Griffin's **Component iPod to TV Cable** is handy, so you can share that stuff on a larger screen ($49). *DV*

[skullcandy.com, coffincase.com, emediamusic.com, griffintechnology.com]

The Christian & Art

WITH KEMPER CRABB

The Disconnect: Why Evangelicals Make Bad Art (Part the Sixteenth)

We've been endeavoring, in past articles, to consider answers as to why, in an America wherein statistically one-fourth to one-fifth of the population claim to be Evangelical Christians, the Church produces such shoddy art. We've seen that Evangelicals, despite a reputation for Biblical literacy, actually have a tenuous grasp of Scripture's content, and an even more tenuous desire to act upon the things they do know from God's Word.

Such a paucity of Biblical wisdom inevitably shapes a Christian artist's view of the world, delivering the artist into unbiblical ideas uncritically culled from the world-system to fill the roaring vacuum left by the absence of a well-rounded Biblical worldview grid by which to measure what is and what is not of value in the culture round about. Mistaken or facile (or nonexistent) Doctrinal ideas inevitably distort the art produced by an artist, as these ideas perniciously affect the artist's goals, content, and even methodology.

We have to date examined a number of the negative consequences of incorrect theology for the making of art, tracing the implications of a shallow or distorted view of the Doctrines of Creation and Eschatology.

In the last several issues, we have begun to consider the artistic deformation wrought by a jake-legged perspective on the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity, seeing that a misunderstanding or rejection of the Triune Persons of the One God destroys the possibility of any grounding of viewing symbols as simultaneously carrying more than one meaning, while also having the potential to unify those multiple meanings. The world (and man) are thus reduced to a flat, univocal picture.

We also saw that minimizing the Mystery of the Trinity also minimizes the reflected mystery in mankind, who is created in the Image of the Mysterious Trinity, reducing our concept of mankind to a uni-dimensional machine subject to quick-fix techniques rather than the rich mysteries of God's Reality. This encourages the production of art which denigrates the Mystery of God, man, and the world, which fails utterly to reflect Reality as it truly is, rendering art which justly reaps the opprobrium of the culture at large.

We saw in past issues that the fact that the Trinity is equally both One or Unified (since God is One Essence) and Many or Diversified (since God is Eternally Three Persons) answers the perennial question of the one and the many, the question of which is more important: The one or the many? The state or the individual? Unity or diversity?

The existence of God as Triune, as Eternal Balance of One and Many, Who has created all things to reveal Himself (Gen.1; Ps. 19; Rom. 1: 18ff.; etc.) teaches us that both the many and the one are equally important and primary.

This means that the rights of the individual and of the state (the collective people) are both to be protected and guarded governmentally. This principle should also be reflected in a very foundational way concerning the relationship of the artist to his audience. One of the questions that has bedeviled artists (especially arts theorists) is: Which is more important, the artist's interior vision or the perceptions of his audience?

Every artist imposes his vision upon the medium through which he expresses himself (whether music, dance, literature, painting, film, etc.), and one of the criteria by which an artist legitimately criticizes his work is by how closely he is able to replicate that vision through his chosen medium. For many artists in the modern era, what matters primarily to them is whether they achieve their inner vision, and, if their audience doesn't understand that vision, so be it: the artist matters, not the audience. The artist in this scenario is concerned with the one (the artist), not the many (the audience). Such a scenario sacrifices accessibility and connection with the audience for the ego-driven vision of the artist (one before many).

In the more commercial sphere of the artistic realm, frequently the artistic vision is ruthlessly sacrificed to whatever is the perceived taste of the audience (the many), reducing the artistic vision (the one) to the lowest-common-denominator deemed to appeal to the most people. This, of course, values the many over the one.

A Trinitarian Balance of the One and the Many should be sought here: neither an artistic vision so rarefied and demanding that it spurns accessibility and understandability to its audience, nor such a dumbed-down work of art that it does not capture the vision of the artist, challenging and changing the perspectives of the audience: a balance of the one and the many. A robust Doctrine of the Trinity, grasped and applied, will guarantee that such a balance remains a standard and a goal to the Christian artist, remedying to that extent the imbalances evident in Evangelical art today.

[kempercrabb.net]

The way I see it
Chris Wighaman

Runners take your mark, get ready, get set …

I remember my first experience in a real race. It was 4th grade and our school had a spring day full of competitions called Field Day. I had been selected to run the longest race of the day: the 800 yard marathon. [Hey, it was 4th grade and it sure felt like a marathon]. All the participants lined up and the Gym Teacher pointed out the orange cones that marked out the path we should take through the course. When she was finished, it was go time. We all stood anxiously waiting for the signal to take off. I shot off the line like a rabid mongoose chasing a squirrel with my snow cone. As we came to the first cone I found myself comfortably in first place and surged forward with confidence that I already had this race wrapped up. When we came to the second cone I turned and found I could not remember which cone to go to next! I instantly made up my mind and took off to the cone I thought was next. After leading the group of 4th graders behind me all over the course the Gym teacher who I thought had been cheering us on was really shouting that we were all going the wrong way! We ignored her negative attitude toward the route I had chosen for us and continued on in what I like to call 'the scenic route' to the finish line which was now in sight. I had been leading the whole way when suddenly I found myself fading and was passed by one, two, three [a girl!], four, five [another girl!], six. I finished in 7th place. Gassed and reeling from my homestretch fade I got my participant's ribbon and a lesson in how NOT to run a race.

We've all been in a race of some sort; whether it's athletic, who can complete the world tour in 'Rock Band' on expert, or the first to call 'shotgun' when heading to the car. My favorite part of a race is the word "Go!" The word 'go' gives direction and a signal to start doing something. When you read through the Gospels you see Jesus used the word 'go' a lot. Go give. Go show. Go in peace. Go tell. Go wash. Go share. Jesus sent people out with goals. Jesus wanted them to do things. He wanted physical action to go with the ideas he was teaching them. I think we sometimes get a little too caught up in hearing sermons, singing songs, and 'fellowshipping'; forgetting that Jesus constantly said "Go." His disciples were sent out into the world with a mission. Maybe it's time we rediscover the word 'go' in our journey with God. Where is it God is sending you? What goal does He have for you to run for?

… Go!

Devotions
with Greg Tucker

The best weapon in Satan's arsenal may be your success.
–Mark 8:36

During my brother's recent visit, his one request was to see the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in nearby Simi Valley. "I want to experience everything," Jeff said, "including The Plane."

By "The Plane" I knew he was referring to Air Force One, the Flying White House for every president from Richard Nixon to George W. Bush. On display since 2005, the massive Boeing 707 is definitely a highlight of the museum, but guests are also impressed with Marine One (the helicopter), a piece of the Berlin Wall, and a full-size recreation of the Oval Office.

Walking from one exhibit to the next — Reagan growing up in Dixon, Illinois; the Hollywood years; his stint as governor of California; two successful terms as President of the United States — my brother and I were awed at every turn. Heck, I even enjoyed the "First Lady's Gowns" collection! But one item impacted me more than the rest, a small sign from our fortieth president's desk. On it were words found in his mother's Bible: "You can be too big for God to use, but you cannot be too small."

I liked reading in a 1998 *George* interview that Tom Hanks went to Bible study throughout high school. Occasionally we'll hear stories like that, of celebrities who at least used to love God. Sometimes their parents were pastors or youth ministers (Wyclef Jean, Katy Perry, Jessica Simpson), but with sad consistency "Christian" is a label no longer used to describe them. More often than not, it seems when a nobody becomes a somebody, their faith is left in their past. At this moment one person is reading HM who is destined for greatness. Maybe it's you. You have the golden combination of hunger, talent, and strategy that will propel you to the top of your field, whether it's on a stage or in a suit, and the Enemy is already planning your spiritual demise. The great weapon in his arsenal is your success, but his goal isn't to turn you against Jesus — you're far too smart for that. He simply wants you to focus more on "making it" than on the One who made it and everything else.

Fervently guard against this! If Satan is successful, at the end of your life, instead of hearing "well done," you'll be shocked to be met with a far different greeting… "Gotcha."

[Greg Tucker lives in your computer at www.HopeCCA.com]

PICK OF THE LITTER

Souljourners

Dream Theater re-wrote the book on Prog Rock when their *Images And Words* album hit yesterdecade, which forged a whole new genre of Prog Metal. While this super young band doesn't really bring anything new or inventive to this scene, they do it about as well as anyone, including the Dream Theater masters/inventors. They've got the necessary chops, which abound, but there's two other ingredients they excel at, too: very listenable vocals and the ability to write hooks that are pleasing to the ear. The first thing you'll hear, besides the stellar production, is the virtuoso treatment of their individual instruments (guitars, drums, bass and keys). The things that'll keep you coming back are the songs and Michael Couts' vocals. It's an amazing testament that he can handle these precise and shredding guitar moments and stay up with the vocals, but he and his bandmates never seem to falter in the performance category. (Doug Van Pelt)
souljournersband.com

Settle The Sky

Oh my! I love it when a band brings it hard, heavy, and furiously fast. (DV)
myspace.com/settlethesky

Robot-8

Fun, quirky electronic blip weirdness. (DV)
robot-8.com

Jesse Sprinkle

The dude's resume is rich: An integral part of one of Christian alt rock's great 90s bands, Poor Old Lu; drums on early Demon Hunter; several beautiful indie rock solo albums; playing with and producing Serene ... and here he brings more sweet and well-crafted pop. (DV)
myspace.com/jessesprinkleofficial

Dave Halverson

Really cool, creative, atmospheric, and all over the place guitars. (DV)
davehalverson.com

XL427

Infectious, plodding organic rock with soft, compelling vocals. (DV)
xl427.com

Bizzart

Crazy, far out, spacy, weird and creative mash-up of electronic madness with some definite hip-hop influence. (DV)
joyfulnoiserecordings.com

Providence

This band has a cool video for the song "The Search," which isn't even the best song on their 17-track melodic rock album, *The Turning Point*. (DV)
providenceband.com

Amplified

Nice low-end growly metal with both dynamics and steady heaviness. (DV)
amplified.dk

Berea

These young lads remind me of a younger Underoath (but not the "metal Underoath," per se). Really tight musicianship, slick production, pleasant vocals, good songs, and creative sing-alongs. (DV)
myspace.com/bereamusic

Jeff Scheetz Band

Easy-going, authentic in-the-pocket blues and 70s rock from this shredder who proves he can show restraint from unnecessary noodling. (DV)
jeffscheetz.com

Nothing Ever Stays

Solid melodic rock with hooks begging sing-alongs. (DV)
nothingeverstays.com

Forever Midnight Sun

Intense, experimental screamo with great production. (DV)
myspace.com/forevermidnightsun

This Reporter

Here's some really pretty, quiet songs with the beautiful high vocals of Jennifer Curtis. Think dreamy pop marching to their own beat. (DV)
myspace.com/thisreporter

With Every Light

Really good radio-ready vocals with this melodic rock band. (DV)
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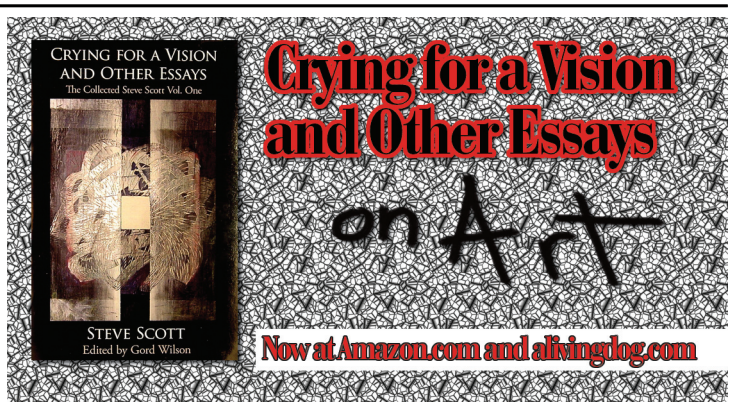
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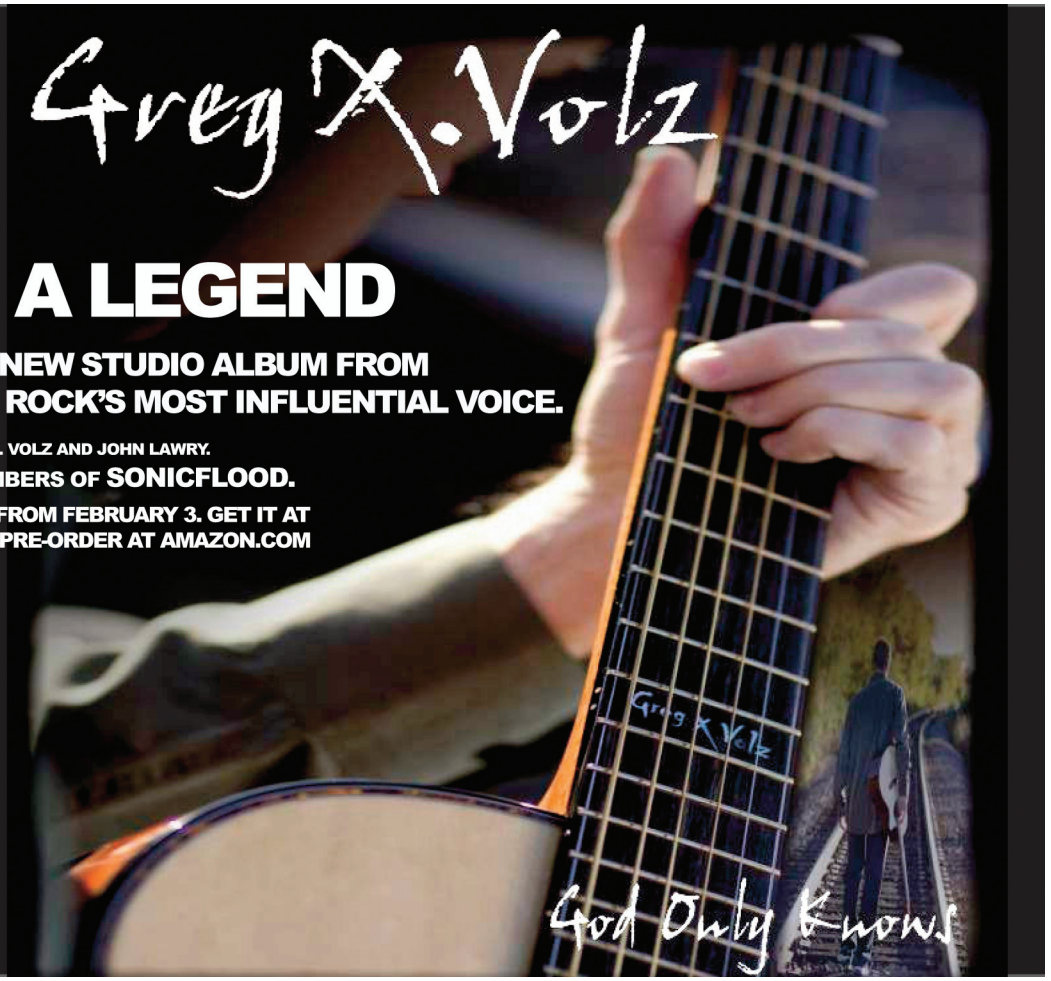

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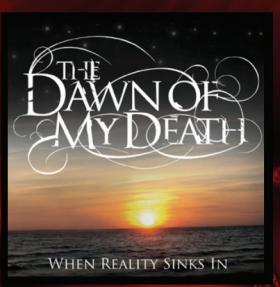

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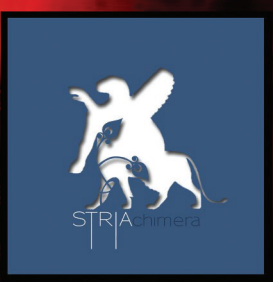

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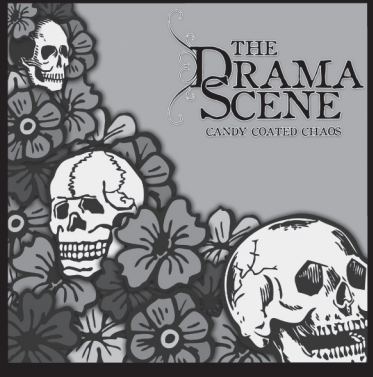

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Death. The statistics show that 1 out of 1 people die. Some believers think that they will be "raptured" and escape death. I have to be honest: If I were the judge and jury on the timing of the rapture, I would not give this escape route to the fat and lazy believers in America. The persecuted church in China, Southeast Asia and in parts of the Muslim world? Yes, but the believers in the U.S.A. (myself included) do not deserve it.

Ignorance. As enlightened as we esteem ourselves to be, our culture tries to push death out of the way. The only people willing to talk about death are labeled "romantics" or "Goths" and marginalized. We take our pets to be gassed once their "cute age" has passed (to quote Tourniquet). We put our old folks in a home, because we don't want to be reminded everyday about our own mortality.

Jesus promised those that follow Him that they would spend eternity with Him after they leave this fleshly body behind in death. Go to a graveyard. Sit down. Ask yourself what you believe will happen when you die.